MRINAL MIRI

Philosophy Disychoanalysis

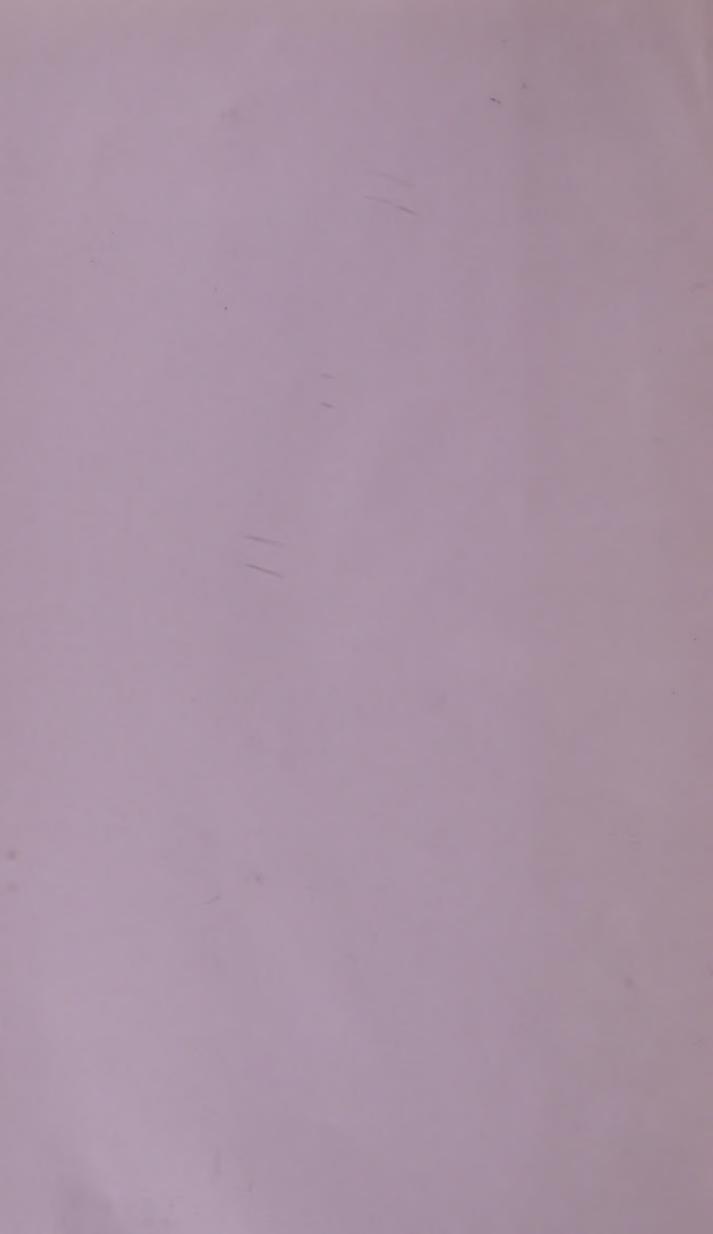
indian institute of advanced study

This small but provocative book is devoted to a philosophical examination of some of Freudian concepts in psychoanalysis.





PHILOSOPHY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS



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MRINAL MIRI

Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1977

Preface

The psychoanalytic theory that I am concerned with here is that of Freud. However, there is nothing like a detailed or systematic philosophical study of Freudian concepts in the book. Instead I pick up controversies surrounding Freudian theory which have cropped up in recent philosophical literature, and generally attempt to provide a philosophical defence of the theory against the background of these controversies.

I believe that among the great minds of this and the last Century—I have in mind names like Hegal, Nietzsche, Marx and Wittgenstein—Freud perhaps had the profoundest insights into our human condition. But his ideas are also perhaps among the most misunderstood in the intellectual world today. As such they have been the victim of unfair criticism and, sometimes, even of ridicule. This book is a very small effort towards a philosophical clarification of some of Freud's basic ideas. I am convinced that a better appreciation of Freud by philosophers today will make a radical difference at least to the area of philosophy known as the philosophy of mind.

I would have liked to have written a much more complete and systematic work, but apart from my own intellectual inadequacy for such a task, various other circumstances prevented me from doing so.

Preface VI

Part of the material of Essay 1 appeared in an article in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 1974. I have the Editor's permission to use it here. Parts of Essay 3 were used in a paper which I read at one of the plenary sessions of the World Philosophical Conference held in Delhi in 1975 under the auspices of the Indian Philosophical Congress. Again I have the permission of the Secretary, Indian Philosophical Congress, to use this material here.

I wrote almost the whole of the first draft of the manuscript for this book during my tenure as a Visiting Fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study. My first debt is to Professor S. C. Dube, Director of the Institute, without whose subtle encouragement and patience I would never have completed the work. The warmth and affection I have received from him and the facilities offered to me by the Institute, I am sure, far outweigh the quality of the work.

My chief philosophical debt is to my friend Ramchandra Gandhi. Many arguments in the book have originated in discussions I had with Gandhi—discussions in which he invariably took the creative and the initiating role. I am also grateful to Hiren Gohain, with whom I did not indeed discuss many of the issues this book is concerned with, but who is responsible, perhaps more than anybody else, for the first awakening of whatever intellectual awareness I now possess.

But my greatest and most profound debt—both professional and personal—is to my wife, Sujata, to whom I dedicate this, my first book.

New Delhi 3, January 1977

Mrinal Miri

Contents

	Preface	V
1.	Self-Deception	1
2.	Explanation, Rationality and Neurotic Behaviour	13
3.	Explanation and Description in Freud	29
4.	Justification	47



Self-Deception

I

SELF-DECEPTION IS THE "action of deceiving oneself"—this is how the O.E.D. defines self-deception. The definition embodies at least an apparent paradox, and yet captures much of our ordinary understanding of the notion. To take the latter point first, the notion of self-deception occurs most significantly in our moral discourse, and our moral attitude towards it is not as straight forward as, say, our moral attitude towards lying. Lying is morally blameworthy in a relatively unobscure way. Although there may be cases of lying to which it may be difficult to take up a definite moral attitude, the obscurity involved in this is different from that involved in self-deception. The latter, it seems, results from the very nature of self-deception. If self-deception is the "action of deceiving oneself", then here we have a case where one and the same person, with regard to the same action of his, is both morally blameworthy (insofar as he is a deceiver) and deserving of moral sympathy (insofar as he is a victim of deception). I think our moral attitude to any genuine case of self-deception does in fact contain both these conflicting elements. There probably are cases where one attitude wins over the other: cases where, for one reason or another, we would like to emphasize one of the two conflicting

elements to the almost total exclusion of the other. Here, I have in mind, on the one hand, cases such as that of the "helpless" neurotic inasmuch as his neurosis is established as a case of self-deception, and on the other hand, more humdrum cases of self-deception which we would not normally classify as neuroses of even the milder varieties.

But how can one deceive oneself? And this brings me to the apparent paradox which, I said, the dictionary definition of self-deception contains. The definition quite obviously tempts one to understand self-deception on the model of deceiving others. Deceiving another person, it might be said, consists in successfully lying to him. (This is not quite right; but for our present purposes it will do.) The following are the necessary and sufficient conditions for one to lie successfully to another person: (a) one makes a statement to the other person which one knows or believes to be false; (b) one intends the other person to believe that the statement is true; (c) the other person recognizes this intention on the part of one; (d) he believes that the statement is true. There may be disputes about this analysis of lying successfully; but I think broadly it is correct.

Now, if self-deception is to be understood on the model of deceiving others, i.e., as consisting of lying to *oneself*, how can, to begin with, conditions (a) and (b) both be satisfied in one's own case? How can one believe that a statement is true which one at the same time knows or believes to be false?

A way out of this paradox may be sought in assimilating self-deception to cases where it would not be held paradoxical for the same person to hold two mutually contradictory beliefs at the same time. Thus I may believe both that a triangle is a rectilineal figure having three sides and three angles and that the sum of the three angles of a triangle is 250°. And this would not normally be regarded as paradoxical: it would merely be taken to reflect my ignorance of elementary Euclidean geometry, or the fact that I have forgotten my school geometry and am misremembering it, or the fact that I fail to notice or work out the implication of my knowledge of what it is for a figure to be a triangle. Similarly in deceiving himself about his love for B, A knows that he loves B, but also at the same time believes that he hates her: this is possible because in his state of self-deception A forgets or does not notice his knowledge that he loves B.

But this assimilation of self-deception to ordinary cases of holding two mutually contradictory beliefs at the same time fails to account for a crucially characteristic feature of self-deception, namely, its intentional character which is what makes the notion morally significant. [In a way this difficulty is the same as that of providing suitable translations for conditions (b) and (c) of successfully lying to another person in order for them to be applicable in one's own case, and then seeing how they can in fact be fulfilled in one's own case.] A knows that he loves B, but deliberately, so we say, avoids believing that he does so and in fact believes the oppossite. The paradox now seems to deepen instead of being removed. How can one deliberately not notice, deliberately be ignorant of, a piece of knowledge about oneself that one possesses? This, it seems to me, is the crux of the philosophical problem about self-deception.

II

A recent quite ingenious attempt at solving this problem is to be found in Herbert Fingarette's book, Self-deception.¹ Fingarette begins by invoking the notion of "explicit consciousness". "To become explicitly conscious of something is to be exercising a certain skill."² This skill, which he calls the skill of spelling out, is assimilated to the skill involved in the capacity to use language. This indeed is the reason for calling it the skill of spelling out: the phrase is intended to suggest "strongly an activity which has a close relation and analogy to linguistic activity."³

Fingarette's first major thesis about spelling out is that "generally speaking, the particular features of an individual's engagement in the world need not be, and usually are not, spelled out by him." An individual's engagement in the world is that relation or set of relations of the individual to the world which can be described in terms of his "aims, reasons, motives, attitudes and feelings..."

- 1. London, 1969.
- 2. *Ibid*, p 38.
- 3. *Ibid*, p 39.
- 4. *Ibid*, p 41.
- 5. Ibid, p 41.

When the individual's engagement is spelled out by him, there is invariably (barring certain exceptions) a reason for doing so. For example, I become explicitly conscious that I am sitting down in a hard chair, i.e., spell out this particular engagement of mine, because of the discomfort I am suffering as a result of this. "... I am lowering the finger of my left hand to the E string. When I do spell this out it may aid or it may hinder the performance, but in any case there will be some special reason for spelling it out, e.g., I have heard myself playing a wrong note, or my finger is sore." 6

If spelling out takes place because of the presence of certain reasons, when spelling out does not take place, then either these reasons are absent or there are reasons against spelling out. It is the latter kind of case that is relevant to the problem of self-deception.

The skill involved in spelling out is such that it enables the individual to assess the reasons for and against spelling out any particular engagement of his. Also the skill is wider than the mere capacity to spell out on the basis of an assessment of the reasons for and against such spelling out. It further enables the individual deliberately to suspend the exercise of the skill in cases where, according to the individual's assessment, there are strong reasons against spelling out his engagement. Here the individual may "skillfully take account of" the fact that there is for him "overriding reason not to spell out some engagement" and, in turn, "refrain from this exercise of our skill in spelling out".7 The crucial clause for the problem of self-deception here is the last one. In order effectively to cope with cases where there are overriding reasons against spelling out, the skill in spelling out must be self-covering, i.e., it must enable the individual successfully to avoid spelling out its own exercise involved in assessing the reasons against the spelling out of the engagement in question. For otherwise the whole exercise will be self-defeating. To take Fingarette's own example:

I find there is strong and preponderant reason for not spelling out—even to myself—that I have been a failure in realizing a certain ambition: consequently I adopt the policy of not spelling this out. What is more, this policy obligates me as well

^{6.} Ibid, p 42.

^{7.} Ibid, p 43.

5 Self-Deception

not to spell out my having made such an assessment of the situation and my having adopted this tactic. For obviously to spell out my assessment would be to spell out that I consider myself a failure, and that there are reasons for not admitting this even to myself, and that these reasons are... And to spell out the policy adopted as a result of the assessment would be to spell out the fact that, though I have been a failure, my policy now is not to spell this out even to myself. In either case, whether I spell out the assessment or the policy—it would amount to a clear abandonment of the would-be policy.⁸

Self-deception then consists in a self-covering exercise of the skill of spelling out in deliberately avoiding spelling out a particular engagement of the individual.

Fingarette's account no doubt has its attractions. It does seem to explain the paradox of self-deception. The availability of the skill of spelling out enables the individual not to be explicitly conscious of certain motives, aims and intentions of his. By the same token the account also seems to explain the intentional character of self-deception. Also, our feeling that there is in some sense deep insincerity involved in self-deception seems to be justified by the account.

However, Fingarette's theory does not really work. The crucial point is that the skill that Fingarette talks about has simply too much work to do. One of the reasons why the notion of this particular skill is invoked is that it is by so doing that talk about self-deception can be freed, according to Fingarette, from paradox-ridden cognitive imagery and terms ("believe", "see", "perceive", "know", "conscious", and so on). But it is not at all clear that Fingarette's skill of spelling out can be explicated except in terms of the language of cognition. The essential thing about the alleged skill is that it enables the individual to assess the reasons for and against spelling out, say, a certain motive of his. But no description of the activity of assessing reasons is possible, except, I think, in terms of what Fingarette calls the vocabulary of cognition: one recognizes, notices, believes, perceives, argues, considers, grasps, realizes and so on. So much seems to be obvious. But in self-

deception the skill enables the individual to do all this and also, at the same time, deliberately to nullify its own exercise. Fingarette's theory manages to explain the paradox only by invoking another equally paradoxical notion. The paradox was: it seems to be the case that in self-deception one recognizes and yet deliberately avoids recognizing; one grasps and yet deliberately avoids grasping. But Fingarette's skill which is supposed to explain the paradox is itself paradoxical insofar as it has to do, at one and the same time, both of two contradictory things: to recognize and, so to speak, derecognize at the same time.

I think the trouble springs from Fingarette's concern to emphasize the volitional, deliberative, active aspect of self-deception. I agree with him that what he calls becoming explicitly conscious is very often a matter of deliberate activity. Aesthetic appreciation for instance affords a clear justification of this. I can deliberately set out to notice the particular or significantly relevant features of a work of art, or of some scenery; and in so doing I become increasingly more explicitly conscious of the work of art or the scenery. I also agree with Fingarette that a person deceives himself through his own agency, and that is why such a person can be the subject of moral appreciation. But in deceiving himself a person is not only an agent, he is also the victim of his own act of deceiving. This seems clearly to be a part of our notion of self-deception. (It is on this that the distinction between hypocrisy and self-deception rests.) Fingarette's theory is unable to explain this, and it is because of this that the paradox of self-deception must remain unexplained on his theory. How the person deceives himself is still a mystery in his account.

I think there is a quite literal sense in which in self-deception a person is the unwitting victim of his own deceiving act. Our pity and sympathy for such a person is not logically misplaced as Fingarette's account might lead us to believe. In order to do justice to this aspect of self-deception we must, I think, take adequate notice of the causal factors involved in the notion of self-deception. A complete mechanistic account of the human mind is impossible, but nonetheless there are causal mechanisms involved in psychological processes such that a due recognition of this is essential if these psychological processes are to be made philosophically clear.

Ш

In what follows I suggest the outline of an answer to the problem of self-deception. My answer quite unashamedly tells a causal story. It may, if you like, be called a causal analysis of the notion of self-deception.

First, I want to point out the closeness between the phenomenon of self-deception and that of habitual lying. We are all undoubtedly familiar with the latter phenomenon. More often than not, in the case of a habitual liar there comes a time, when he is, as we say, "taken in by his own lies", when he no longer believes them to be lies, but takes them to be true. And I think it is interestingly a matter of empirical fact that a habitual liar tends to repeat his own lies to himself and to others. I want to say that there is here a causal mechanism involved whereby repetition of statements which are false and known to be false eventually produces a belief in their truth. Of course I do not, by any means, wish to suggest that this is its only mode of operation; in fact I believe that the mechanism is quite fantastically sophisticated. Indeed I think there must be such mechanisms, otherwise much of the success of propaganda and what goes by the name of brainwashing would become inexplicable. It is characteristic of propaganda and brainwashing that they do not appeal to our reason but make use of our psychological susceptibilities. They consist in the deliberate exploitation of the kind of mechanism that I am talking about.

But, it will be asked, how is this relevant to self-deception? Here we have a case of one and the same person believing that p and believing that not p at another time. And there is nothing paradoxical about this. In self-deception both the beliefs are apparently present at one and the same time.

I can best bring out the relevance of my point about habitual lying by first stating some of the other points of my thesis. While I think that for a person to act on a belief or motive he must, under certain conditions, be capable of acknowledging the belief or the motive, it is not necessary for him to acknowledge it at any particular time or all the time. Next, I want to bring to the centre, the

9. This is not a new point, but part of its importance lies in its implied assertion that beliefs and motives cannot simply be dispositions to behave, in the crude behaviourist's sense.

notion of motive: self-deception, I would like to say, consists primarily in concealing from oneself some one or other of one's motives or sets of motives. I think it is undeniable that a very large part of our moral thinking lays great stress on what might be called "purity of motives". And when one is the subject of one's own moral scrutiny, it is one's motives that one looks for first. There are powerful moral and social—social, because much of morality consists in "internalization" of codes of social behaviour—reasons for the individual to have and to appear to himself to have "pure" motives. And it is because of this that the need for self-deception frequently arises: one has to conceal from oneself one's own "impure" motives. Beliefs, opinions, knowledge, emotions, etc., undoubtedly are concealed, but—so it seems to me—only insofar as they are connected with motives which stand in need of being concealed.

Motives are in general more or less permanent features of one's personality: they are generally invoked to explain patterns of behaviour, courses of action, over a period of time. Love, ambition, hatred, lust, greed and so on are in general not momentary or even shortlived things. In this they are different from what we might call mental occurrences, e.g., sensations.

Now when there is a powerful need to conceal from oneself a particular motive of one's own, one can, I want to suggest, deliberately put in motion the sort of causal mechanism which is involved in the case of the man who is eventually taken in by his own lies, or is exploited in propaganda and brainwashing. One's effort succeeds to the extent that one is also taken in by one's lie about one's motive. But to condition oneself thus not to avow or acknowledge a motive is not of course the same as to abolish it altogether. The motive, if it was a powerful one, if it had, as it were, a firm grasp over one's personality, remains operative. issues in actions which are appropriate to it. And this is typical of self-deception. In self-deception, one sincerely does not avow a motive, or rather disavows a motive which is evidently operative in one's actions.

I will now summarize my position: The notion of self-deception seems to involve a paradox. It seems that a person who deceives himself believes in the truth of what he knows to be false. How can this be possible? My answer to this consists in first pointing out that there is available with one a causal mechanism whereby one can, in some sense condition oneself into believing, let us

9 Self-Deception

say, what one has known to be false. Secondly, I say that self-dedeption has primarily to do with concealment from oneself of certain of one's own motives; and that one can have motives without actually acknowledging or avowing them so long as, under given conditions, one can avow or acknowledge them. 10 Next, when one acts on a motive, one knows that one has it, not because one avows it—which one may or may not—but because one is capable of avowing it, given certain conditions. Fourthly, in self-deception one avails oneself of the kind of causal mechanism that I have talked about, in order to condition oneself into disavowing a particular motive or set of motives. Finally motives are operative even when they are not avowed; and the conditioning involved in self-deception results in the fact that they are not avowed even when the normally suitable conditions for their avowal are present. This of course does not mean that the motives in question can never be avowed. Conditions can be created for their avowal, and this is part of the justification for saying that "deep in his heart" the person deceiving himself still knows his motive. The intentional character of self-deception consists in the fact that one deliberately avails oneself of the causal mechanism which enables one to disavow a motive which is evidently operative in one's actions.

The paradox of self-deception is now explained. There is a perfectly plausible sense in which a person can be said to believe in the truth of what he knows to be false. A person knows that he has a certain motive and not another, although he does not, under normal circumstances avow it—and in fact disavows it—and special conditions have to be created for its avowal.¹¹ I hope I have shown how this can happen. Thus a person believes that he does not have a motive which he knows himself to have.

I think my account also sufficiently justifies our feeling that a person who genuinely deceives himself is not merely an agent, but in a real sense also a victim of deception. The causal mechanism, once it is set in motion, blinds the individual to much of his inner life. It sets as it were a veil of perception between a person's conscious life and his real motives; and unlike Fingarette's skill which the individual has deliberately to keep in operation the whole

^{10.} See Essay 3 and 4 below.

^{11.} Conditions such as the psychoanalyst creates through the employment of his special technique.

time, it has to a great extent, what one might call, a life of its own. I think it hardly needs reminding that much of our mental life is very often at the mercy of causal factors which we can only dimly apprehend.

A worry might arise from a consideration of the fact that in selfdeception a person not only disavowas a motive that he has, but invokes a different motive or set of motives to explain the behaviour or pattern of behaviour which is evidence for his concealed motive—the phenomenon which in psychoanalytic vocabulary is called rationalization. The causal thesis that I have put forward successfully explains the concealment from oneself of a particular motive or set of motives of one's own. But how is rationalization to be explained? The answer, I think, is quite obvious. Since in self-deception the individual causes himself to be incapable, under normal circumstances, of acknowledging some motive of his in spite of the motive being operative in his behaviour, when he is under any kind of pressure to explain this behaviour of his, he will from the very nature of the case, invoke other motives. And it is an interesting fact that the motives one ascribes to oneself in rationalizing one's behaviour are "acceptable" motives—what I have called morally pure motives. 12 This is owing to the fact that the goal of self-deception is generally to appear to oneself to be morally non-blameworthy.

I want to conclude this essay by briefly considering a real case of self-deception. This is a case described in a book entitled *Foundations of Psychopathology* by John C. Nemiah (also quoted by Fingarette). It is the case of a bedridden patient in a hospital:

The patient was very much concerned about his disability. He insisted over and over again that he had to "get going", that the "inactivity was killing him"....Although he seemed to be quite sincere in making these statements, his behaviour belied his overt attitudes. During his entire stay in hospital he lay positively and helplessly in bed....Because his total collapse had occurred after his second operation the focus of psychiatric interviews was directed to this event in the hope of uncovering relevant emotional problems. The patient related in a matter of

12. I am, of course fully aware that there cannot be a single definitive list of morally pure motives. Such a list will vary from culture to culture and even, occasionally, from individual to individual.

11 Self-Deception

fact way that he had not really wanted the second operation. He had been afraid that this might make him worse; and furthermore although he did have pain, he was satisfied with his ability to work and function despite the limitations imposed by his condition. When he was asked whether he resented the pressure brought to bear on him to undergo surgery, he denied having had such feelings. He spoke very quietly, calmly and without any show of emotions about the entire matter. (He was given sodium amytal intravenously.) The effect of the drug was striking; as the patient now discussed the second operation, he told with considerable show of resentment how the doctors had called him almost daily to urge him to enter hospital immediately for an operation. His family's pressure was even greater and more insistent.... As the patient described these pressures and his attempts to withstand them, he began to express greater and greater anger at everyone involved, both family and doctors, of whom he said vehemently, "They stink". Suddenly speaking of at last deciding for surgery, he said, "So I finally decided if I had to cut my throat I would cut my throat —and here I am; the family needed a lesson".

When he awoke (the patient) had no memory of the interview, of the rage he had expressed, or of the details of his family's and doctor's behaviour which he had recounted under the drug. Instead he spoke without anger or feelings, and described the circumstances of his surgery exactly as he had done before being given sodium amytal.

I wish to make only one comment about this case, namely that the causal thesis I have advocated seems to be nicely borne out by it. Any explanation in terms of Fingarette's skill is frought with difficulty. It is understandable how the administration of a drug might enhance or diminish the exercise of a skill, and even how it might enhance the exercise of one aspect of a skill but diminish another (games and atheletics). But the trouble with Fingarette's skill is that the administration of the drug neither enhances nor diminishes its exercise; nor does it do both. It only seems to ressult in a change of its field of operation. The exercise of Fingarette's skill is entirely a rational activity, i.e., it has to do with assessment of reasons. Any exercise of the skill is based on reasons that the individual has already assessed, and it is kept in operation

for thereasons that the individual has taken account of. Any change in its exercise must therefore be accompanied by the appearance, in some sense, to the individual, of new reasons. But the administration of a drug as such can hardly be a reason for the individual to change the field of operation of his skill in spelling out. And there is nothing else that really fits the bill in this case. All this apart from the difficulty of how to account for our feeling that in self-deception the individual is a genuine victim of deception.

My causal thesis, on the other hand, quite obviously does not face any such difficulty. Also it is of a piece with any causal process involved in the administration of the drug.¹³ The ability to avow his real motives acquired on the administration of the drug, and the loss of this ability as the effects of the drug wear off, are quite easily explained in terms of the effects of the drug on the workings of the kind of causal mechanisms that I have talked about in this essay.

Explanation, Rationality and Neurotic Behaviour

IN THE LAST ESSAY, without entering directly into a discussion of psychoanalytic theory, I tried to defend a basic contention of this theory. In the present essay psychoanalytic explanation becomes my direct concern.

In recent philosophy psychoanalytic explanation has been the subject of much controversy. In what follows I discuss one particular area of this controversy, namely, the area indicated by the title of this essay. The controversy, to my mind, is a false one and arises mainly from a lack of understanding, on the part of the various participants, of the nature of what might be called "analytic experience". A contributing factor is the overemphasis of the role

1. See, for instance, (i) the collection of papers under the heading "Logic, Psychoanalysis and Morals" in Philosophy and Analysis, ed. M. Macdonald, Oxford, 1954; (ii) A.C. MacIntyre, The Unconscious, London, 1958; (iii) R. S. Peters, The Concept of Motivation, London, 1962; (iv) Peter Alexander, "Rational Behaviour and Psychoanalytic Explanation", Mind, 1962; (v) T. Mischel, "Concerning Rational Behaviour and Psychoanalytic Explanation", Mind, 1965; (vi) Frank Cioffi, "Wittgenstein's Freud" in Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein, ed. Peter Winch, London, 1969; (vii) Harvey Mullane, "Psychoanalytic Explanation and Rationality", The Journal of Philosophy, 1971; The Monist, Vol 56, No 3, July, 1972.

of the rationality/irrationality distinction in the assessment of human behaviour.

The controversy centres round the question, "Given the legitimacy and validity of psychoanalytic explanation, can neurotic behaviour be regarded as rational?" And some quite serious charges arise out of this controversy. One of these is that the Freudian theory of neurotic behaviour is not a genuinely explanatory theory: at best it can justify, but not explain neurotic behaviour. This is a serious charge because the very notion of psychoanalytic therapy, which is the major concern of psychoanalysis, is based on the supposition that psychoanalysis can provide genuine explanation of neurotic behaviour.

I

I begin with the notion of rationality. The controversy connects this notion with psychoanalysis in the following way: Ordinarily the notion of rationality of an action goes with the notion of reasons for the action and the latter is connected with concepts such as, motive, intention, desire, wish and so on. But psychoanalysis aims at connecting neurotic behaviour, which would ordinarily be regarded as irrational, with the last group of concepts in just the way in which they normally confer rationality on actions. So if psychoanalytic explanation is genuine explanation and is successful, then we have the paradoxical result that irrational behaviour is really rational. A further conclusion is sometimes drawn from this to the effect that this would blur the important ordinary rationality/irrationality distinction to such an extent as to render it really quite useless.³

Usually the paradox is sought to be avoided by so defining rationality as quite explicitly to make it inapplicable to behaviour which may be thought to be capable of psychoanalytic explanation. And this way seems to accommodate both a sympathetic and a hostile attitude to psychoanalytic explanation. Let us take Harvey

- 2. Peter Alexander, "Rational Behaviour and Psychoanalytic Explanation", Mind, 1962.
- 3. Ibid.
- 4. Compare Peter Alexander (*ibid*) and Harvey Mullane, "Psychoanalytic Explanation and Rationality", *The Journal of Philosophy*, 1971.

Mullane's article in The Journal of Philosophy.⁵ His two conditions for rationality of behaviour are as follows: (i) "for behaviour to be rational the agent's reasons must be conscious or preconscious: that is, either he is aware of them or he can become aware of them without any unusual effort—without for example undergoing psychotherapy." And (ii) "a piece of behaviour is rational only if the agent is justified in believing that what he does (a) is likely to achieve, or (b) is one possible way (which in certain circumstances may be a very unlikely way) of achieving what he wants to achieve, (c) and is not likely to bring about other consequences more undesirable than the prospective desirability of what it is intended to achieve."

Now condition (i) is, of course, sufficient to rule out neurotic behaviour from the area of rational behaviour. But it is thought to be a consequence of this that the "neurotic's reasons for behaving according to some neurotic pattern...are not his reasons". And if this is allowed it is quite clear that neurotic behaviour cannot fulfil condition (ii) either of rationality.

Whether or not this analysis of rationality is correct, there is an assumption, although not a necessary one, behind this analysis, and this assumption must be rejected. And once it is rejected, the correctness or incorrectness of the analysis becomes to my purpose somewhat irrelevant. This is the assumption that the rationality/irrationality distinction ranges over all human behaviour except the class of behaviour called non-rational which broadly coincides with the class of reflex behaviour, e.g., fainting, or jumping when startled, wincing, laughing (in their typical instances). (But non-rational behaviour also includes such cases as "sheer accidents involving unforeseeable events, like unavoidably running over someone who runs out in front of a car".) It is also allowed that the rationality/irrationality distinction admits of degrees. An action can be more or less rational or more or less irrational.

It seems to me that there is a whole class—a fairly large class—of actions over which the rationality/irrationality distinction simply does not operate. In other words, of any member of this class

- 5. Ibid.
- 6. Ibid. p 421.
- 7. Ibid.
- 8. Ibid, p 423.
- 9. Mind, 1962, p 332.

it would be quite inappropriate to ask whether it was rational or irrational or more or less rational or more or less irrational. Also —and this, I think, is an important point—this class of actions is quite different from what is ordinarily classed under "non-rational" behaviour. 10 I have partly in mind such actions as the following: I idle in the lawn and chew a blade of grass, I occasionally watch rain drops on my glass window and some nights I look at the stars for a minute or two. All these actions I may do for some reasons, and therefore, depending on whether my reasons are good or bad they may be rational or irrational. But very often I do them without any reason at all; and if pressed for a reason, all I could say would be, "I just felt like doing it". This, however, would be only another way of saying, "I just did it, and that's all that there is to it". When this is the case it would be quite inappropriate to call my action either rational or irrational. Yet, we should also feel uneasy about calling it non-rational.

Another class of actions which, to my mind, transcends the rationality/irrationality distinction consists of many members of the class which may be called artistic activity. People, of course, write poetry, paint pictures and create shapes in mud and stone for various kinds of reasons. But often they may do these things without any reason at all, either "conscious or preconscious". That is, there is, in these cases no answer forthcoming to the question, "Why did you do this ?" asked of the agent. Or, rather, there is an answer and it is, "For no particular reason at all". Yet these actions are not irrational; how can they be when the capacity to do them, among other things, marks off humans among other creatures? Nor are they of course non-rational. There are two things to be considered here—which I might call the thought behind the act and the act itself. (For example, I think I want some cigarettes and go to the nearest shop to buy a pack of them. There may be reasons both for my thought and for the way I go: I may want the cigarettes because there are guests coming to my house to whom I would like to offer cigarettes or because I know I am dying of cancer any way and so want to enjoy my last cigarettes; and I may run, walk, jump on one leg, take the shortest route, the easiest or the most difficult route to get the cigarettes.) I think of writing a poem and actually sit down and write it. And my point is that very often neither of

^{10.} See below p 23-24.

these can be brought under the rationality/irrationality scale. Granted that I have poetic skill and know that I have it, I may think of writing a poem without any particular reason at all, and the way the poem comes to me may have nothing to do with any conscious or preconscious ratiocinating procedure. The following passage from Pasternak's *Dr Zivago* beautifully illustrates this point:

After two or three stanzas and several images by which he was himself astonished, his work took possession of him and he experienced the approach of what is called inspiration. At such times the correlations of the forces controlling the artist is, as it were, stood on its head. The ascendency is no longer with the artist or the state of mind which he is trying to express, but with language—his instrument of expression. Language, the home and dwelling of beauty and meaning, itself begins to think and speak for man and turns wholly into music, not in the sense of outward audible sounds, but by virtue of the power and moment of the inward flow. Then like the current of the mighty river polishing stones and turning wheels by its very movement, the flow of speech creates in passing, by the force of its own laws, rhyme and rhythm and countless other forms and formulations, still more important and until now undiscovered, unconsidered and unnamed.11

Is such an act rational or irrational? The question just does not seem to arise. And to call it non-rational would, I think, be quite inappropriate. Another class of behaviour over which the rationality/irrationality distinction does not seem to operate is the class called ritual behaviour. Such behaviour can be placed on the rationality/irrationality scale only on the assumption that the agent here wants to achieve a conscious or preconscious end through his behaviour. But I think it can be shown—indeed perhaps it has been shown—that much of ritualistic behaviour is not really aimed at achieving any conscious or preconscious end. And this is sufficient, at least if we go by Mullane's definition of rationality, to show that such behaviour is neither rational nor irrational. Yet, to include such behaviour in the class of non-rational behaviour would perhaps be to miss the whole point about the former.

11. Tr. Max Hayword and Manya Harari, London, 1958, p 105.

I must make clear that the notion of rationality as it is used in the controversy is quite distinct from—though no doubt related to—the very general notion of rationality which presumably marks off humans—or, as Jonathan Bennett points out, language-using creatures as such—from all other creatures. The latter has to do with self-consciousness and the ability to employ criteria of correctness and incorrectness to thinking. Insofar as it is this general notion that we are concerned with, all language using creatures are rational, and most of the actions which I discussed in the preceding section would, inasmuch as they are specific to human beings, be rational in this sense. But when the notion is employed in the assessment of particular human actions or patterns of human behaviour it has a somewhat different role to perform. I think both Mullane and Alexander are quite right in thinking that in its latter application the rationality/irrationality distinction ranges over actions which can be said to be aimed by their agents at achieving specific ends. Where they both go wrong is in further supposing that most human actions are aimed at achieving specific ends. All the actions I discussed in Section I are instances of actions which are not aimed by their agents at achieving any particular ends, and they are quite typically human.

[I wish here, in passing, to make a comment on Mullane's two conditions of rationality. The utilitarian implication of the notion of rationality is quite clear in his two conditions: The "reasons" of condition (i) have to do with the utility of the action in question for achieving the agent's intended goal of condition (ii). But as it stands Mullane's analysis shares with some versions of utilitarian ethics the danger of being too stringent. One of the clauses of condition (ii) says, an action is rational only if it is not likely to bring about other consequences more undesirable than the prospective desirability of what it is intended to achieve. But since the consequences of human actions may be quite indefinite and it is notoriously difficult to foresee them, Mullane's criteria of rationality may, in principle, be impossible to apply. However, the difficulty perhaps is not insurmountable. All Mullane may have to do is suitably to amend the statement of the two conditions of rationality].

A notion which is closely connected with the notion of rationality -I am now concerned only with the "narrow" sense of rationality—of actions is that of the intelligibility of an action. A rational action is also one which makes sense, and a totally irrational action is one which perhaps does not make any sense at all. But the notion of intelligibility of actions is much wider than that of their rationality. Much of animal behaviour makes sens, but we don't want to place such behaviour on the rationality/irrationality scale, and this in spite of the fact that such behaviour is purposeful or goal-directed. On the other hand artistic activity which only highly gifted individuals are capable of again makes eminent sense and yet, as we have seen, may fall outside the rationality/irrationality boundary. Also there is an undeniable strand in our moral thinking according to which the morality of an action depends on its being free from any considerations of consequences. A "complete" philosophy of morality can be built on this strand of our moral thinking. Whether or not this would be an adequate philosophy of morality it is certainly not an obvious consequence of it that moral actions are impossible. And if we were to accept such a philosophy of morality we would, I think, be committed to the view that moral actions qua moral actions fall outside the fationality/irrationality boundary, although certainly not to the view that moral actions qua moral actions don't make sense.

It seems to me that much of the confusion in the controversy I have spoken about springs from a failure clearly to see the distinction between the notion of intelligibility of actions and that of the rationality of actions. The criteria of intelligibility may vary from type to type of actions—and rationality itself may be a criterion of intelligibility—whereas the criteria of rationality are broadly what Alexander and Mullane take them to be.

Ш

But let us turn now to neurotic behaviour and psychoanalytic explanation. Given that psychoanalytic explanation is genuine explanation and is at least sometimes successful, how does neurotic behaviour fit into the scheme of things outlined above.

If we accept that psychoanalytic explanation is a valid mode of explanation then, it seems, we are committed to the view that

neurotic behaviour (i.e., behaviour which falls within the domain of psychoanalytic treatment) makes sense, and that part of what contributes to the sense of such behaviour is the fact that there is purpose behind such behaviour, or that it is, in some sense, intended or motivated. Let us take one of Freud's own—rather famous—examples. A woman patient was given to various obssessive acts; one of them was to run out

of her room into the next room, in the middle of which, stood a table with a cloth upon it. This she pulled straight in a particular manner, rang for the housemaid, who had to approach the table, and sent her off again on some indifferent errand. During her efforts to explain this compulsion it occurred to her that at one place on the table-cloth there was a stain and that she always arranged the cloth so that the housemaid was bound to see it. The scene proved to be a reproduction of an incident in her marriage. On the wedding night her husband had met with a not unusual mishap. He found himself impotent, and 'many times in the course of the night came hurrying from his room' to hers in order to try again. In the morning he said he would be shamed in the eyes of the hotel chamber-maid who made the bed, so he took a bottle of red ink and poured its content over the sheet: but he did it so clumsily that the stain came in a place most unsuitable for his purpose. With her obssessive act, therefore, she was reproducing the bridal night. ('Bed and Board' indeed comprise marriage).13

A complete psychoanalytic explanation of this obssessive act will no doubt take us back deep into the patient's early childhood experiences. But the partial understanding which the above passage, together with one or two other facts about the patient which Freud relates a little earlier on, makes available, gives us an inkling into the structure of psychoanalytic explanation; and this is sufficient for our present purpose. The obssessive act is the expression of a repressed wish for sexual satisfaction. But the expression is distorted, and this is because the unconscious wish has to contend with a strong feeling of guilt about sexual relationship and a corresponding desire for self-denial. (The patient had refused marital relations

13. Sigmund Freud, Collected Papers, Vol II, p 29.

with her husband.) The resultant obssessive act, is so to speak, a compromise between the conflicting demands of these two emotions. But the act not only expresses the repressed wish; it, in some sense, also fulfils it. One can even say, if one likes, that the obssessive act is really aimed at fulfilling the repressed wish. (One objection which, I think, needs considering at this point is contained in the following reported 1emark of Wittgenstein's: "The majority of dreams Freud considers have to be regarded as camouflaged wish-fulfilment and in that case they don't simply fulfil the wish."14 How can the obssessive act we are considering be the fulfilment of the wish for sexual satisfaction? The point is a logical one: The concept of wish is such that the statement of a wish necessarily contains a reference to the condition of its fulfilment and the wish, therefore, cannot be said to be fulfilled unless this condition is satisfied. I wish to climb the Everest, and this wish can be fulfilled only by my climbing the Everest. The point of the objection can be granted. Yet there will be ways of making sense of Freud's talk of disguised wish-fulfilment. One way is as follows: In neurotic behaviour it is not a single wish but a complex of wishes that is operative. In the particular example we have chosen there is the wish for sexual satisfaction, but it is essential to the theory that it claims that the very nature of this wish is such that it sets in motion an opposite wish, namely, the wish not to have to fulfil that wish. The obssessive act could then be regarded as literally the fulfilment of the latter wish. This way of avoiding the difficulty will not at all be odd in any way, for the meaning of many of our normal conventional gestures can be understood in the same way: "I will throw you out of the class room!" said in a threatening tone of voice to someone who is making a nuisance of himself, can be the fulfilment of my complex wish both to throw him out of the class room and not really to have to carry out the threat.15 But one may still feel uneasy about Freud's talk of wish-fulfilment for he does talk of the repressed wish itself being fulfilled in a different guise. Perhaps now one can say the following: it is true that the repressed wish is not literally fulfilled; but neurotic behaviour (and also dreams) may be thought of as a "devise" for obtaining as far as is possible (i.e., as far as the peculiar condition of the patient will allow) the kind of

^{14.} Wittgenstein, Lectures and Conversations, ed. Cyril Barrett, p 47.

^{15.} I owe this point to a suggestion by Ramchandra Gandhi.

satisfaction, or rather some part of the satisfaction which the literal fulfilment of the wish will give. To turn to our example above. I think it can be said in general that part of the satisfaction in the fulfilment of a wish very often consists in the acknowledgement by others of this fact. Recognition by X of the fact of Y's potency may be part of the satisfaction Y derives from the fulfilment of his wish to be potent. We can now say that the woman's obssessive act affords her a similar part of the satisfaction which the literal fulfilment of her repressed wish is likely to give her. I think I have now said enough to show that Freud's talk of wish-fulfilment is logically not as unsound as it might appear to be. 16

It seems, therefore, that on Freud's theory neurotic behaviour is classifiable as behaviour aimed at resolving some conflict of mutually incompatible desires, or, at fulfilling some highly complex wish. And normally such behaviour does have a place on the rationality/irrationality scale. Normally my desire for something embodies an end to aim at, and depending on how I set about achieving this end my action is rational or irrational. (cf. Mullane's two conditions of rationality.)

But there are crucial differences between normal wish-fulfilling or conflict-resolving behaviour and neurotic behaviour, even if we accept that psychoanalysis is a legitimate mode of explaining neurotic behaviour. To appreciate these differences is also to see that neurotic behaviour cannot really be placed on the rationality/irrationality scale, and that it cannot belong either to the class normally recognized as non-rational behaviour.

The first and the most important thing to note is that neurotic behaviour springs from a wish which is repressed, that is, a wish, which, from the very nature of the case the patient cannot be conscious of. This alone shows that neurotic behaviour cannot be the result of actual deliberation of ends to achieve. The patient himself is frequently genuinely baffled by his own behaviour and sometimes he gives reasons for his behaviour, which must even to himself, appear extremely inadequate. (cf. the attempt made by the patient of our example to justify her obssessive act by sending the maid on an indifferent errand every time she called her.) It may now be tempting to say that neurotic behaviour is really irrational.

^{16.} For a slightly different treatment of Wittgenstein's remark, see below, Essay 3, pp 33-35.

But such a temptation is easily dispelled. Neurotic behaviour makes, if we accept psychoanalytic explanation, too much sense for it to be irrational. The way in which notions such as wish, purpose, motive, intention, etc., are connected with neurotic behaviour, although not sufficient to confer on the latter the status of rationality, is certainly sufficient to preclude it from the class of irrational behaviour.

Should we not then call neurotic behaviour non-rational? I think this is a convenient point for me to try and remove a possible uneasiness which some might already have felt about what I have said so far. In Section I above¹⁷ I gave examples of kinds of actions which, to my mind, seemed to transcend the rationality/ irrationality boundary. But I also said that these actions were such that it would also be inappropriate to call them non-rational. A question that might immediately rise to mind is: What other alternative can there be? And one might point to another familiar classification in support. An action is either moral or immoral or non-moral; what other alternative can there be insofar as we are working with the classification at all? But I think in this area of philosophy, as perhaps in most others, we must be wary of classifications. They tend to blind us to differences and details which it may be extremely important to point out. To confine ourselves to the present subject. Take Alexander's idea that behaviour which does not fall within the area of rationality/irrationality distinction is non-rational. But then look at his examples of non-rational behaviour: fainting, jumping when startled, wincing and sheer accidents involving unforeseable events like unaviodably running over someone who runs out in front of a car. And now compare this class of cases with the class I discussed in Section I. No doubt it would be useful for some purposes to call them all non-rational, but the differences are enormous and a mere look at the examples will remind us of these. Take the passage I quoted from Pasternak's Dr Zivago, 18 and imagine the gulf that divides what, for want of a better phrase, we call artistic inspiration, and a reflex action like wincing. For one thing, artistic inspiration, say in writing a poem, can only come to someone who already has a tremendous mastery over language. 19 Wincing does not require

^{17.} See above pp 16-17.

^{18.} See above p 17.

^{19.} See E.H. Gombrich, "Freud's Aesthetics", Encounter, January, 1966.

any such mastry. Again if we go strictly by Alexander's examples we must feel very uneasy about calling much of animal behaviour, especially in the case of the higher animals, non-rational.

It may be said that neurotic behaviour is non-rational because it is mechanical. Mullane, for example, says, "Defence 'mechanisms' are so named for the good reason that the psychic processes that are said to bring about neurotic (and hence defensive) behaviour 'operate' in a purely mechanical way. Repression is purposeful, but its manner of operation is not any more rational than the body is rational in its purposeful regulation of body temperature." This statement involves, I think, a profound misunderstanding of Freudian theory and this explains Mullane's bafflement as to why Freud always resisted the temptation to "identify" unconscious process with neurophysiological events. 21

Unconscious mental processes are quite unlike "purposeful" physiological processes such as the regulation of the body temperature, or the regular beating of the heart, in that the former, very importantly, have to do with *language* whereas the latter do not.²² (I do not here wish to enter into the controversy about the theory of "contingent identity" of mental and brain processes. My position in this controversy is that the identity thesis in any of its variety of forms is logically untenable.)²³ Take the Freudian notion of wish. The concept of wish is quite different from the concept of need, or, if you like, that of instinct. Freud quite often insisted that a wish is not an instinct, but a "representation" of an instinct—the "idea" of one. And "representation" and "idea" are connected with meaning and language.²⁴

In his monumental work, Freud and Philosophy, 25 Paul Ricoeur provides us with insights into psychoanalytic theory which are crucial for our present discussion. He says, "What distinguishes a wish from a need is that a wish is capable of being stated." That is, it is a logically necessary condition of having a wish that it can

- 20. The Journal of Philosophy, 1971, p 420.
- 21. Ibid fn p 420.
- 22. My argument here is an important extension of the argument of Essay 1 above.
- 23. But for a discussion of the "identity thesis" in a slightly different context see below, Essay 3, pp 43-44.
- 24. Also see below, Essay 4, pp 56-57.
- 25. Yale, 1970.
- 26. Freud and Philosophy, p 400.

be expressed in language by the person in question; and this is not true of need or instinct. Animals have the latter, so perhaps do plants. But they do not express them in language. Another important feature of the notion of wish that Ricoeur points out, and which really springs from the fact that a wish must be capable of being expressed in language, is "that wishes are a demand on another person." Very often there is implicit, in the expression of a wish, an appeal to other people whether real or imaginary. "I wish I had Rs 300,000/-" may contain an appeal to somebody in particular, to nobody in particular but generally, or even to God (prayer), to make it the case that I had this sum of money. And an appeal is something which must be expressible in language.

But although a wish must be capable of being stated in language—and this is a fundamental assumption of Freudian psychotherapy—it is also part of psychoanalytic theory that once a wish is repressed it can no longer be stated or affirmed in a literal sense. Statement and affirmation are functions of language at the conscious level. The kind of language in which a repressed wish can find expression is what might be called pictorial language: the language of imagery, metaphor, similie, myth. The signifiers of such a language can either be things (as in the case of the patient of our example above) or images (as in the case of dreams). And this language has not only the role of expressing the wish in question, but also fulfilling it in the qualified sense that I tried to make clear above.²⁸

Now the language of the repressed wish has, one might say, its own "grammar". It obeys rules which are summed up in the Freudian concepts of condensation, displacement and considerations of representability. Freud talks of these as unconscious processes. This may not altogether be a happy expression and no doubt this has a lot to do with the suggestion that Freudian unconscious processes are really identical with processes in the nevous system. For one thing, is obeying a rule always a process? And when we are obeying the rules of the grammar of our language are we engaged in a process of any sort? Perhaps here we should say the following: condensation is not a process of condensing; nor is displacement a process of displacing. An image is condensed in the

^{27.} Ibid, p 372.

^{28.} See above pp 20-21.

sense that it can be spelt out in a certain way. And it is displaced in the sense that there are certain sorts of connexions between it and certain other images. When a poet uses an expression which, as we say, is highly "economical" he does not go through a process of economizing.

There are two things about the language of repressed wish which it is extremely important to point out. The first is that although the language does not contain affirmation, denial, contradiction, etc., it is translatable—a better word perhaps is "paraphrasable" into the language of affirmation, denial, contradiction, etc. (There is a remark of Wittgenstein to the effect that if a dream consists in significant use of language, and is translatable into say, English, then it ought to be possible to "translate" the translation back into the dream. And obviously this is not possible. I think my use of the word "paraphrase" to a certain extent avoids the difficulty. It is impossible to construct the original poem from just a paraphrase of it.) The language of affirmation, denial, contradiction, etc., is the language of self-consciousness or, we might even say, self-knowledge. This assumption is, I think, at the heart of Freudian psychotherapy. The aim of psychotherapy is to enable the patient to achieve this translation or paraphrase for himself. For the patient to achieve this is also for him to attain self-knowledge; for him to be able to give direct (conscious) expression to his wish and, therefore, also to be able to dispense with neurotic behaviour. The second point which is intimately connected with the first is that the language of repressed wish operates without the conscious control of the person in question. It has a kind of autonomy not at all unlike the kind of autonomy language acquires under artistic inspiration which Pasternak talks about in the passage from Dr Zivago that I quoted earlier on. Another helpful analogy will be that of a child's spontaneous use of language while at play by himself. And it seems to me that the use of language in much of "folk arts" bears this mark of spontaneity or autonomy.

Now if all this is granted it is quite clear how far we have moved away from the kind of non-rational mechanistic explanation that we must expect to find in physiology. It should also be clear why neurotic behaviour may not be called rational. The notion of rationality when employed in the assessment of particular actions is too closely connected with the notion of conscious deliberation for it to be applicable to neurotic behaviour. Nor is neurotic

behaviour irrational, for the simple reason that such behaviour is expressive of meaning, sense and significance.

IV

It should be clear by now that the objection that psychoanalytic explanation obliterates the distinction between the notion of rationality and that of irrationality has really no force. On Freudian theory neurotic behaviour just falls outside the scope of this distinction and can, therefore, have nothing much to do with it. It is quite true perahaps that prior to Freud's discoveries neurotic behaviour was regarded as typical of irrational behaviour. But these discoveries have made a tremendous difference to our conceptual organization of mental reality and of human action. However, they do not necessitate upon us the abandonment of the quite useful rationality/irrationality distinction. And a strong enough contrast is available within the area where psychotherapy does not operate, for this distinction to be legitimately employed. Perhaps nothing in human behaviour is completely irrational; but, then, perhaps, no piece of human behaviour is completely rational either. But this does not matter as long as the notion of a scale or degrees of rationality finds application in actual practice. And psychoanalysis does not really encroach upon this notion.

What about the objection (Alexander's) that the Freudian theory of neurotic behaviour is not a genuinely explanatory theory, that at best it can justify but not explain neurotic behaviour? The distinction between justification and explanation that this objection rests on is as follows: An action is justified insofar as adequate reasons can be given for its performance in the context in which it is performed. But an action is explained only if the adequate reasons that are given for its performance are the reasons on which the agent acted, i.e., these reasons are his own reasons. The objection now, in effect, is that since in neurotic behaviour the agent is ex hypothesi not aware of the reasons for his action, the reasons that the psychoanalytic theorist proffers for his action cannot be his (the agent's) reasons: so at best the theorist only justifies neurotic behaviour and not explain it. The answer to this is, I think, quite obvious. The repressed wish from which neurotic behaviour springs is the agent's own wish and not something just attributed to him by the analyst. The whole point of the analytic exercise is to enable the patient sincerely to avow his own wish. To say that this is a very special procedure which does not have much in common with ordinarily coming to realize one's own wishes and motives and so on is to beg the whole question against phychoanalytic theory.

V

In this essay I have tried to show that a certain controversy surrounding psychoanalytic theory is really a false one. The controversy arises with the question, "If we accept the legitimacy and success of psychoanalytic explanation of neurotic behaviour, are we to regard neurotic behaviour as rational or irrational?" I have, I hope, shown that neurotic behaviour falls outside the area of the rationality/irrationality distinction, and therefore, that it is pointless to ask the question which gives rise to the controversy. I have also given reasons for saying that given the limited notion of non-rationality that the participants in the controversy seem generally to work with, it is at least quite misleading to call neurotic behaviour non-rational. It has similarities with what is paradigmatically rational behaviour, but there are crucial differences as well; and it has also similarities with what is paradigmatically non-rational behaviour, but here again the differences are inescapable and important. In this neurotic behaviour is by no means a class apart. Also I have tried to answer some of the objections to psychoanalytic theory which arise within the controversy.

Explanation and Description in Freud

IN THE LAST ESSAY the legitimacy of psychoanalytic explanation was more or less taken for granted in our discussion of the controversy. In the present essay I enter an area of controversy which has to do more substantially with psychoanalytic explanation itself.

Let me begin with some quotations:

What did Freud do? Not just suggest a set of causes for the data, the neurotic symptoms and the rest, but tell us for the first time what the data were¹

...if the prestige of causal explanations makes us rush past the ascriptions of purpose in order to concentrate attention on Freud's causal explanation of the neurotic patient's inability to recognize his symptoms for what they are, and to control and to alter his behaviour we shall miss a whole dimension in Freud's achievement. For an essential part of Freud's achievement lies not in his explanations of abnormal behaviour but in his redescription of such behaviour.²

- 1. MacIntyre, The Unconscious, p 62.
- 2. Ibid, p 61.

His (Freud's) recognition of purpose is logically independent of his causal explanation. But when Freud refers to the patient's behaviour as unconsciously motivated he compresses the two parts of his explanation into one.³

Implicit in these statements is the idea that Freud's description of neurotic behaviour can be divorced from his explanation of it in such a way that the validity and correctness of the former may be seen to be quite independent of the validity and correctness of the latter: We may accept the description and reject the explanation altogether. This dichotomy between description and explanation in Freud's work is, I think, a spurious one. Of any genuine description it must be possible to ask whether it is a correct description. In other words there must always be criteria of correctness for any genuine description. Of any putative description where there are no obvious criteria of correctness, it must be doubted whether it is a genuine description at all. In Freud's case the criteria of correctness of his redescription of abnormal behaviour are embodied in his explanatory theory. His "explanation of abnormal behaviour" and his "redescription of such behaviour" cannot thus be divorced from one another in the way that the statements quoted above seem to do.

Much of the confusion here, I think, arises from an inadequate appreciation of the fact that psychoanalysis—at any rate in Freud's hands—is a science of *interpretation*. Explanation here consists in spelling out meanings—meanings of bits of actions, patterns of behaviour, dreams, thought processes, etc., whose surface meanings are obscure. The interpretations (redescriptions) that psychoanalysis offers flow from certain fundamental assumptions about the workings of the human psyche. And these assumptions are essentially causal. Empty a Freudian description of a piece of neurotic behaviour of all its explanatory content: what you will have left is something more like poetic imagery and not really description in the ordinary sense of the term. Take the following:

Wilt thou (sleep) upon the high giddy mast Seal up the shipboy's eyes and rock his brains In credle of the rude imperius surge.⁴

- 3. *Ibid*, p 63.
- 4. William Shakespeare, Henry VII.

This is an image, and it does not involve explanation of any sort, and deeply moving as it is, the question of truth or falsehood does not arise with respect to it. The explanatory content of a piece of psychoanalytic description of neurotic behaviour, on the other hand, marks it off from mere imagery of this kind, and turns it into a statement whose truth or falsehood can be assessed.

I

Let us take one of the ways in which the kind of distinction implicit in the passages quoted above is sought to be made. Mac-Intyre says, "The concept of wish-fulfilment which we have seen to be so important in Freud's theoretical structure is not a genuinely causal concept." The idea is that if this were true, then wishfulfilment could not be regarded as a genuinely explanatory concept. Some of the things that MacIntyre says (e.g., "an essential part of Freud's achievement lies not in his explanations of abnormal behaviour but in his redescription of such behaviour") would seem to ignore the very important consideration that there may be varieties of explanations. I think here the assumption is that explanation in terms of causation is the only genuine mode of explanation. This may indeed be true, but it is not true obviously; and if it is true, its truth therefore needs to be shown. Take the notion of desire. I don't think anybody would like to deny that to say that a certain action is done out of a particular desire is also very often to explain it. Yet it seems a strong case could be made out for saying that desire is not a causal notion, that is, for the view that to explain an action in terms of a desire is not necessarily to assign a cause to it. However, fortunately for my present purpose, I do not have to enter into this controversy. Freud not only describes neurotic behaviour in terms of wish-fulfilment, he also explains it in these terms: and his explanation consists precisely in treating wish-fulfilment as a causal notion.

What I wish therefore to do is to try and show that the position that the notion of wish-fulfilment cannot be a genuinely causal notion is not a tenable one. Indeed, I will not argue for the extreme position that wishes are necessarily causes. This is not necessary for my purpose. All I need to show is that there is nothing logically wrong in the supposition that wishes can be causes.

5. The Unconscious, p. 66.

I assume the kind of argument MacIntyre has in mind is similar to arguments produced in support of the thesis that desires cannot be causes of actions. The main thrust of these arguments is that there is a conceptual connexion between desires and actions, and that this rules out the possibility of their being causally connected.

The thesis is a vague one; but I suppose, in its most clear and plausible form it is that: the causal theorist is wrong because he will be forced to admit, under logical pressure, that there is no intellectual access to a desire except as the cause of the action which is supposed to be its effect. If this were true there would seem to be here a clinching argument against the causal theorist. But unfortunately this is not true, and in any case the point is specific to the notion of desire. There may, in this respect, be subtle differences between the notion of desire and the notion of wish.

There is certainly a conceptual connexion between a wish and its object, but this connexion cannot prevent the possibility of their being a causal connexion (a) between a wish and the realization of its object, and (b) between a wish and action (if any) directed towards the achievement of its object. The controversy has been primarily about the possibility of causal connexion of the latter kind. Fortunately my purpose here will be served even if point (a) alone is granted. A wish is not in fact causally connected with the realization of its object (i.e., a wish is not by itself the cause of its fulfilment), but there is no logical incoherence in the suggestion that it might be. As Pears says, "fairy stories, which treat wishes as causes and describe a wish simply as concentrated willing that such and such should happen, may be incredible but they are not conceptually incoherent."6 Having made this point, however, Pears does not go on to discuss the nature of wishing any more. But I think a proper understanding of Freud's talk of neurotic behaviour as wish-fulfilment crucially depends on a deeper appreciation of this point.

Freud's statement that, say, neurotic behaviour or dream is wish-fulfilment is usually taken to mean that neurotic behaviour or dreaming is action of some kind *directed* somehow *towards* the fulfilment of a wish. Taken in this way, it becomes immediately obligatory for us to enter into the controversy about (b) above.

^{6.} D. Pears, "Are Reasons for Actions Causes" in *Epistemology*, ed. A. Stroll London, 1969, pp 206-207.

Besides in any case, it will be said, how can anybody soberly believe that lunging systematically at lamp posts, for instance, is action directed towards fulfilling the wish to kill one's father? However, the statement can quite plausibly be taken to mean just what it says—namely, that neurotic behaviour or dreaming embodies (in a symbolic way) the fulfilment of a wish, the attainment of its object. Once we see the statement in this light, the analogy between the logic of wishing in fairy tales and Freudian psychology becomes clear. The differences, of course, are enormous. But the crucial thing is: in both wish is a genuinely causal notion; and there is no conceptual incoherence committed by either on this account.

I wish to come back to this point via a consideration of a much more fundamental objection to Freudian theory embodied in the remark of Wittgenstein's which I already briefly discussed in the last essay. In the present essay, however, I propose to take a somewhat different approach to the remark. The remark in question was: "The majority of dreams Freud considers have to be regarded as camouflaged wish-fulfilments and in that case they simply don't fulfil the wish".

There are, it seems to me, two quite different theses embodied in this remark. But the two theses are conflated; and while one of them is valid, the other is quite false. The two theses can be brought out by alternately emphasizing two words in the quoted sentence: "camouflage" and "fulfil".

To take the second emphasized word first, since in neurotic behaviour as in dreaming wishes ex hypothesi are not fulfilled in reality, they cannot be said really to be fulfilled at all. This point is really incontestable, and has really nothing to do with dreams being camouflaged fulfilment of wishes; for no dream-fulfilment whether direct or camouflaged of a wish can be the real fulfilment of the wish. No wish except the wish to have a dream of a certain kind can be fulfilled by a dream. What can be allowed at the most, therefore, is that in dreams there can only be dream-fulfilment of wishes and in neurotic behaviour, there can be only "neurotic" fulfilment of wishes. But Freud would have had really no quarrel with this tautology. His theory does not require a thesis which is stronger than this. What it does emphasize, however, is that between the wish

and its dream-fulfilment, there is a causal connexion. It is therefore the other element of the remark which must be taken seriously in the context of Freudian theory. What this element does is to question the most inalienable character of Freudian theory, namely that it is a theory of interpretation. A science of interpretation is based on the following fundamental assumptions: (i) that its subject matter has meaning, sense or significance; (ii) that this meaning is for a subject of experience; (iii) that it is only obscurely, obliquely present in the subject matter, and (iv) that it has to be unearthed, made clear through interpretation. Assumption (iii) is what seems to be questioned by Wittgenstein's remark: it seems to deny that dreams cannot have a meaning which is somehow hidden from their surface. It is, of course, not known whether Wittgenstein would have cared to extend this remark about dreams to other cases. But, I think, it is quite clear that, thus extended, the remark would be obviously invalid. It must then be taken to be specific to dreams. But there does not seem to be any argument at all to show that dreams must be a special case.

What has gone wrong, I think, is that the two theses have been conflated, the two theses namely that (i) dreams cannot be camouflaged fulfilment of wishes, and (ii) they cannot really, in reality, fulfil wishes; and the truth of (ii) is taken to be the same as the truth of (i). But from the logical fact that wishes cannot in reality be fulfilled, if they are "fulfilled" only in dreams, it does not follow that there cannot be dream-fulfilment of wishes. But no such argument seems available.8

8. One argument perhaps may be this: If it is possible for there to be camouflaged dream-fulfilment of wishes, it must be possible for there to be camouflaged fulfilment of wishes in reality as well, and this, however, is not the case. But is it so? The idea of camouflage, as far as the present argument goes, comes to no more than this: There is a situation which is truly describable as the fulfilment of a wish of mine, but this description, for some reason is not available to me at the time. For example, I have never had bhang in my life, although I have always wished to; and unbeknown to me what I have in my friend's house under the description "sweet" is reallybhang. The situation is thus describable as the fulfilment of my wish to have bhang although this description is not available to me at the time. It might be said that the non-availability of the description here is owing to my ignorance, while, in neuroticb ehaviour, as in dreams it is due to, onemight say, self-deception. But this point is really not at issue as far as Wittgenstein's remark goes.

Now granted that there can be fulfilment (direct or camouflaged) of wishes in dreams, to repeat the question we have already asked and partially answered: How can there be a causal connexion between a wish and its dream-fulfilment? The important thing to note is that dreaming is not something which the subject does in order to fulfil a wish of his. The dream represents—one might even say—it is a state of affairs which is describable as the fulfilment (one must of course add "in dream") of the dreamer's wish. The relationship between the wish and its fulfilment is of the same logical order as that between a wish and its fulfilment in the fairy tale. Both are causal: The only difference is that while the former is a real causal relationship, the latter is not. But it might be thought that there is another crucial difference, and this is that while in the fairy tale the object of the wish is realized in the objective, interpersonal world (no doubt of the fairy tale), in a wish-fulfilment dream the object is realized only in the dreamer's own private world. But this difference, while it is undoubtedly a genuine one, is really collapsible into the first. The second difference springs from the fact that the causal relationship in the fairy tale is only an imaginary one, and that this relationship in dreaming is an actual one (a justifiable one). real cause-effect relationship between a wish and the realization of its object can exist only in the subject's own private world, and no doubt, when this is the case, the subject's private world in which the wish is fulfilled takes on some of the characteritics of the interpersonal public world. It is quite easy to see that this happens in dreaming, because of the analogy between dreaming and hallucination.

The same is true of neurotic behaviour, although at first sight it may seem difficult to make out. The space of the dream world is a private space: it is unrelated to the space of the intersubjective public world. But neurotic behaviour takes place in this common space. How can then neurotic behaviour be regarded as embodying the fulfilment of a wish in a private world? One thing that is certain is that neurotic behaviour cannot be regarded as the fulfilment of a wish in the *public* world. But, I think, the following can be said. Neurotic behaviour and all the elements of the common world to which it seems to be connected are bound together by meanings which are derived from the particular experiences of the patient, and are peculiar to him. These meanings are different from meanings which constitute the world of common objects. It is not simply

that neurotic behaviour and the elements of the public world which are connected with it have a symbolic significance in the way in which "concrete imagination" in poetry has symbolic significance; but although they are elements in the common world, they get detached from the network of common meanings and come together in a new nexus of meanings which are the patient's own. And this detachment is not something that would ordinarily be regarded as voluntary—that is within the patient's self-conscious control. It is something that happens, as it were, in spite of himself. This is what gives it somewhat of the character of objectivity which is not unlike the "objectivity" of a dream-world. The patient, in more than a metaphorical sense, *lives* in this world of which his own neurotic behaviour is a central part. The latter, as it were, gets detached from the real world and forms the neucleus of the neurotic's private world.

11

So far we have considered one of the ways in which it might be sought to drive a wedge between explanation and description in Freud's psychology, namely, by treating wish-fulfilment as a merely descriptive, non-causal notion. If wishes could not be regarded as causes, then Freudian theory would not be an explanatory theory at all. There would be in it owing to conceptual confusion an illusion of explanation but no real explanation. And the thesis about separation of description from explanation would be a thesis about separating the illusion from the reality. But if, as I have shown, wishes can be the causes of the realization of their objects, and if it is a fact, as it is one, that Freud did proceed from this assumption, then would it still be possible to separate explanation and description in Freud? Yes, so it might be said; for we could replace Freud's explanation by some other (s) either without any loss or even with some positive gain, while Freud's descriptions could be retained just as they are. This seems to be the argument of the following passage from MacIntyre's book:

While Freud illuminatingly describes a good deal of behaviour as unconsciously motivated and describes too how the recall of events and situations of which we had become unconscious may have a therapeutic role, he wishes to justify not just the adverb or the adjective but also the substantive form: the Unconscious. Yet from the supposition of such an entity what consequences flow that could not otherwise be predicted? Freud's hypothesis as to the infantile origin of adult traits and disorder can all be formulated without reference to it.9

Let me take the sentence: "Yet from the supposition of such an entity (e.g., an unconscious wish which is causally charged) what consequences flow that could not otherwise be predicted". Well Freud never claimed the power of prediction for psychoanalysis: "So long as we trace the development from the final outcome backwards, the chain of events appears continuous, and we feel we have gained an insight which is completely satisfactory or even exhaustive. But if we proceed the reverse way, if we start from the premises inferred from the analysis and try to follow these up to the final result, then we no longer get the impression of an inevitable sequence of events which could not have been otherwise determined. We notice at once that there might have been another result, and that we might have been just as well able to understand and explain the latter". And, while the "chain of causation can always be recognized with certainty if we follow the line of analysis... to predict it along the line of synthesis is impossible."10

For Freud perhaps that he was not claiming the powers of prediction for his science was a reluctant admission; but nevertheless it contained a profound insight into a truth about the sciences of man; the truth, namely, that prediction in the sense in which it is understood in the physical sciences is not possible in the sciences of man; And this, in spite of the fact that the sciences of man are, like the physical sciences, concerned with giving causal explanations of what they study.¹¹

I suppose now MacIntyre's question can be reformulated as follows: If Freud was not interested in prediction any way, what difference does it make to our understanding of the data which, as MacIntyre says, were redsecribed illuminatingly by Freud,

- 9. The Unconscious, pp 71-72.
- Freud, "The Psycho-genesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman", Standard Edition of the Works of S Freud, Vol 18, p 167 and p 268.
- 11. For a very able elaboration of this insight, see Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and Sciences of Man" International Review of Metaphysics, 1971.

whether or not we accept also his explanations of the data? Mac-Intyre's suggestion is that we would be much better off scientifically, if, instead of accepting Freud's "hypothesis" of repressed wishes, we talked only in terms of, say, brain processes.

I shall come to this suggestion of MacIntyre's presently. But let us first examine the view that we can retain Freudian description of neurotic behaviour, while at the same time altogether rejecting the Freudian explanation of it. Let us first grant (without much conviction) that all genuine explanation must tell a causal story. Now if my argument of the previous Section is correct, it follows that reference to wishes can legitimately occur in a causal story told in the explanation of a piece of neurotic behaviour. A difficulty, however, is created now by the fact that these wishes which are part of the causal story must be regarded as unconscious, or as residing in the Unconscious. This difficulty can be circumvented—so seems MacIntyre's view—on the one hand, by focussing our attention on the fact that wishes performed scriptive role, and, on the other hand, by ignoring the possibility that wishes can be causes as well.

Let us pursue this suggestion. Take the distinction between latent and manifest contents of dreams which is so crucial for Freud. The manifest content of a dream is what might be called our ordinary pre-Freudian description of it; the latent content is the Freudian redescription of the manifest content. We must note, however, that the re-description does not replace12 our ordinary description, rather it interprets the latter, gives it its correct meaning, constitutes a "translation" of it. Now, MacIntyre's suggestion is that we can divest this description of all reference to unconscious causal processes, and retain it as a valid contribution to our understanding of dreams. Is this possible? It might be possible if it were the case that the Freudian "rules of translation" from the manifest to the latent content did not involve any reference to the origin of the manifest content—of the individual images and experiences that make up the latter. Unfortunately, however, this is not so. Even in the case of those elements of the manifest content of a dream (which Freud calls "symbols"), which have a sort of fixed meaning independently of the dreamer, an investigation of their "proper" meaning in the context of a particular dream must ask questions about their origin

^{12.} Occasionally MacIntyre talks as though Freudian description replaces our ordinary pre-Freudian description.

in the dreamer. As Freud puts it13, "Often enough a symbol has to be interpreted in its proper meaning and not symbolically". And to interpret in its proper meaning is to embark upon an enquiry into its origin in the mental processes of the dreamer. This is, of course, all the more true of elements in the manifest content other than "symbols". Let us take one of the simplest of all dreams discussed in The Interpretation of Dreams: "A child of under four years old reported having a dream that he had seen a big dish with a big joint of roast meat and vegetables on it. All at once the joint had been eaten up whole and without being cut up. He had not seen the person who ate it."14 The latent content of this dream is as follows: The unknown person of the dream is the child himself, and the dream represents the fulfilment of his own wish for rich food. But how is this interpretation arrived at? Only through a genetic, a causal enquiry whose aim is to identify the wish. In this particular case the enquiry reveals the following:

By doctor's orders he (the child) had been put on a milk diet for the past few days. On the evening of the dream day he had been naughty, and as a punishment he had been sent to bed without supper. He had been through this hunger cure once before and had been very brave about it. He knew he would get nothing, but would not allow himself to show by so much as a single word that he was hungry. Education had already begun to have an effect on him.¹⁵

It is clear that what fixes the meaning of the dream for Freud is its explanation in terms of the causal powers of a wish. How can then the kind of separation—envisaged by MacIntyre—between the latent content of a dream and a reference to causal process in the mind be achieved? Obviously, the dream can be interpreted in other, non-Freudian, ways; e.g., in terms of anxiety, future promise of food and so on, but what gives legitimacy to the Freudian redescription is precisely the availability of an explanation in terms of the causality of a particular wish. MacIntyre's prescription about separation therefore amounts to this: Retain Freud's redescription,

^{13.} The Interpretation of Dreams, London, 1958, p 352.

^{14.} Ibid, p 267.

^{15.} Ibid, p 268.

but at the same time, remove the very ground on which such a redescription is based.

Let us return to neurotic behaviour. MacIntyre's own example is as follows:

The patient performs an obssessional ritual, say, before going to sleep. Jugs, clocks, everything that might fall or make a noise must be removed from the room. When all is done the room once again must be inspected to make sure that nothing has been left undone. Pre-Freudians we say that this unaccountable behaviour is such that the patient is unable to sleep and so to have a normal life. Freud points out that the patient performs the ritual in order not to sleep. Then he accounts for this attitude of the patient by a causal explanation in terms of what the patient experienced when as a child she woke in the dark and when she was taken into the parent's bed. 16

Now there is not really much that is specifically Freudian in MacIntyre's suggested "description": "The patient performs the ritual in order not to sleep. The ritual expresses the patient's fearful avoidance of sleep". Such a description may well form part of a larger description of the case which may be clearly non-Frudian. Thus we might say that the patient is playing with himself a rather boring and unimaginative game of inventing excuses for not sleeping. Such a description sees purpose in the ritual and may nicely accomodate MacIntyre's suggested redescription; and yet Freudianism can hardly have anything much to do with it. A Freudian redescription of the case will no doubt recognize a purpose in the ritual, but will inevitably go further in connecting all the elements of the pattern of neurotic behaviour with one another and with the patient's past experiences—both immediate and remote—in such a way as inexorably to point to an explanation in terms of the workings of a wish formed as result of childhood experiences. The redescription, in other words, is the result of a causal enquiry, the object of which is an unconscious wish. To retain the Freudian description and, at the same time, to reject his explanation, would be something like accepting the description of case of death as a case of murder, while, at the same time, rejecting any explanation of the

^{16.} The Unconscious, pp 61-62.

case in terms of deliberate killing by one or more other human beings.

Here we must note a distinction between wish-fulfilment in neurotic behaviour and wish-fulfilment in fairy tales. 17 In a fairy tale the situation which is describable as the fulfilment of a wish, can be so described even though the wish itself had nothing causally to do with the coming into being of that situation. Thus instead of the wish bringing the situation about, it might have been God or a kind spirit. However, the wish-fulfilment meaning underlying neurotic behaviour can be there at all, because the behaviour can be explained as having resulted from the operations of the wish. One reason for this may be that the connection between the wish-fulfilling situation and the wish in a fairy tale can be established without any enquiry into the origin of the former, whereas neurotic behaviour gets its Freudian meaning at all only by virtue of its origin in the wish which it represents as fulfilled. In Freud the semantic and the genetic enquiry go necessarily hand in hand; the meaning of neurotic behaviour is determined by its origin. A consideration of any case history in Freud will make this point abundantly clear. Take an actual case of obssessional neurosis discussed by Freud: A young girl of 19 suffered from two nightly obssessions: she must have silence at night and must exclude all possibility of noise, and she must arrange her bed in one particular way. The latter obssession consisted of making sure that the bolster at the head of the bed did not touch the back of the wooden bedstead. Also the pillow must lie across the bolster exactly in a diagonal position and in no other; she would then place her head exactly in the middle of the diamond, lengthwise.

Analysis revealed that the ritual expressed the fulfilment of the girl's wish to separate the parents and prevent intercourse from occurring. The bolster "meant" her mother and the upright back of the bedstead her father. Now the elements of the ritual could have acquired such meanings for the patient only through a (causal) chain of association of ideas (meanings) which linked them eventually with the wish. In spelling out the meanings of the ritual, one will have to tell a causal story in terms of association of ideas which will terminate in the wish itself.

To conclude this part of my argument, MacIntyre's suggested

17. See above p 47.

"Freudian" description of the neurotic ritual of his example is not Freudian at all, except in a trivial sense. It can become Freudian only by being extended in a particular way. And this will consist in filling in details whose justification will depend on the possibility of telling a certain causal story. In this Freudian redescription of neurotic behaviour is similar to the historian's redescription of historical events: To say that the independence of India was the triumph of Indian nationalism is to imply the truth of a certain causal story about Indian independence. For the event(s) described as independence of India to have this meaning (i.e., "triumph of Indian nationalism") a certain causal (genetic) explanation of these events must be true.

An objection at this point might be that if Freudian redescription of neurotic behaviour involves the truth of the Freudian explanation of such behaviour, then wouldn't Freud be really arguing in a circle? The description would be justified in terms of the explanation; but also the explanation in terms of the description.

But, of course, this is really not so. As I pointed out a little earlier, in Freud the causal and the semantic enquiry go hand in hand. The possibility of a certain description points to a certain explanation and the possibility of a certain explanation points to a certain description. But there can be no doubt that the primary enquiry is the causal enquiry.

The objection would have a degree of plausibility if it were the case that, as MacIntyre sometimes seems to believe, that Freudian redescription of neurotic behaviour replaces (displaces) our ordinary description of such behaviour. For then it would be reasonable to suppose that Freud, from the start, presents the data in such a way as to presuppose the truth of his explanation of the data. The truth, however, is that Freud does not dispense with our ordinary description of neurotic behaviour; rather he arrives at a redescription of such behaviour by means of pursuing a certain conception of their causal explanation.

A difficulty here may be presented by the writings of the present-day Freudians who reject the primacy of some of Freud's explanatory notions, e.g., the Oedipus Complex. Take Eric Fromm's brilliant little essay, "The Oedipus Complex': Comments on the Case of Little Hans". 18 Fromm's procedure here may seem such that he

psychoanalytic explanation of these data in terms, which are radically different from Freud's. If this were so, my argument so far would be invalidated, and there would be support for MacIntyre's view that we can accept Freud's redescription of neurotic behaviour while, at the same time, rejecting his explanation of it. However even a slightly careful reading of Fromm's essay will show that he shifts the emphases in Freud's redescription in such a way that the result is a description which is quite other than the one that Freud meant. And of course it is this that suggests for Fromm an explanation in terms other than the Oedipal wish.

Now to MacIntyre's suggestion that we would be scientifically much better off, if instead of Freud's own explanation of the data as redescribed by him, we accepted an explanation of them in terms of neurophysiological processes. I think, it is clear in view of our discussion above that the only way in which this suggestion could be made to seem plausible is by accepting the so-called identitythesis in relation at least to unconscious wishes. For only then, it would see:n, we could retain Freudian description (in terms of wish-fulfilment), and yet have an explanation in terms of brain processes. Apart from the quite serious difficulties of the Identity Theory which has been pointed out fairly frequently in recent philosophical discussions, there is one difficulty which seems crucial in the present case. This may be stated as follows: Among the claims made by the Identity Theory is the one that mental concepts are to be analysed causally. To take an example, the notion of a sensation, say, of pain, is that of something which is the cause of a characterstic kind of behaviour which is called "pain behaviour". This something is (may be) contingently identical with a brain process. It is important to remember here that the brain process which is taken to be identical with the sensation gets its name ("pain") from the behaviour that it characteristically causes. This would presumably be true of all mental processes which are conscious. But there is a significant difference in the case of at least some unconscious mental processes. Take the notion of a repressed wish which is supposed to be the cause of neurotic behaviour. Now neurotic behaviour is not characteristic, typical of behaviour which is the effect of the operations of a wish. It is because it is so different that the need for interpretation arises. Suppose then before a description of neurotic behaviour in terms of wish-fulfilment becomes available,

we trace the chain of neurophysiological causes of such behaviour and are able to identify the originating cause. This cause, however, will not be identifiable as a wish prior to our identification of the behaviour itself as wish-fulfilment. But if our arguments above are correct, the latter identification is possible at all only through a causal enquiry of quite another sort, namely, the sort that psychoanalysis pursues. The upshot of all this is as follows: A neurophysiological explanation of neurotic behaviour may indeed be possible, but if we want to retain Freudian description of neurotic behaviour, the primary causal enquiry must be the Freudian one. Independently of this latter enquiry, there would be no way of identifying the originating neurophysiological process(es) as the repressed wish.

Let us now look for a moment at MacIntyre's contention that he finds Freud's redescription of neurotic behavious illuminating, although he would, at the same time, like to reject Freud's explanation of it. From our discussion so far it would seem to follow that one account of the illuminating character of Freud's redescription is to be found in the fact that his redescription contains an explanation of neurotic behaviour which is such that it gives us new insights into the workings of the human psyche. If this is right, then denuded of its explanatory content "Freudian" description would also perhaps lose its illuminating character. But perhaps we have misunderstood MacIntyre all along. Maybe for him, it is enough for a description of a piece of neurotic behaviour to count as Freudian that it sees purpose in the behaviour and that the agent is unconscious of this purpose. Freudian description would then be illuminating in that it sees purpose in behaviour which to pre-Freudians appeared purposeless. Such a minimal characterization of Freudian description might also escape difficulties about causal explanation, for it may well be that mere recognition of purpose in a piece of behaviour need not commit one to any kind of causal explanation of it. There is, however, a crucial difficulty in this argument; and this has to do with the fact that Freudian description is not the only one which sees purpose in neurotic behaviour. Some pre-Freudian description of neurotic behaviour, say, interms of possession by an evil spirit, or punishment by God, also see neurotic behaviour as essentially goal directed; and it may at least sometimes be part of such descriptions that the subject is unconscious of the purpose behind his behaviour. For Freudian description to

be illuminating, as opposed to these other descriptions which also see purpose in neurotic behaviour, the way it sees purpose must therefore be different. And it is my contention that this difference cannot be specified without also enlarging the description in a way which will clearly link it up with Freud's explanatory scheme. Take MacIntyre's own example of obssessive ritual which I quoted above. His suggested description of the case ("fearful avoidance of sleep") while it sees purpose in the ritual, is not really particularly Freudian just as it stands. Nor is it in any clear sense illuminating. The behaviour now cries out for explanation, and without any explantaion forthcoming, it is at least as baffling as it was under any pre-Freudian description. And what will enrich the description in order for it to attain a recognizably Freudian character will have to be an explanation of the kind that Freud provides. The illumination that Freudian description carries seems therefore to reside precisely in the explanatory character of the latter.

I have not, of course, in this essay argued for the inviolability of the Freudian doctrine. All that I have tried to defend is its integrity. The doctrine, in my opinion, cannot be divided up in the way that MacIntyre and some others have suggested.

Ш

In this and the following Section I make two very brief remarks about causality and predictability respectively in connection with psychoanalytic theory.

The causality involved in unconscious wish-fulfilment is quite unlike the causality of physical processes. The former has to do with ideas, elements of meaning, and the latter obviously does not. Let us take part of the case history of the so-called Rat Man: one summer while on a holiday in the mountains the patient suddenly had the idea that he was too fat and decided that he must lose weight drastically. He then put this decision into operation in the most single-minded way. He would leave his meals unfinished and go for long runs along the roads in the summer heat and clamber up a steep mountain until he fell down exhausted. Analysis of the patient revealed the following: He had a cousin called Richard who was known as Dick; Dick was close to the girl with whom the patient was involved, and this made him jealous of

Dick. We can then represent the chain of causation through meaning in the following way: feeling of jealousy towards Richard \rightarrow wish to get rid of him or attack him \rightarrow getting rid of the Dick (fat) or attacking the Dick by running. We must remember once again that the patient's neurotic behaviour is not something in which he engages in order to fulfil his wish of attacking Dick, but it is something which represents the fulfilment of the wish; it rerepresents the wish, in Freud's words, as fulfilled.

IV

Part of the explanation of the fact that psychoanalysis is not a predictive science is to be sought in its basic concern for explanation through the discovery of connexions of meaning. The chain of association of meanings is open-ended in a way in which a physical causal process is not open-ended. Given the laws of physics and astronomy, an eclipse of the sun, for example, can be predicted with the utmost degree of accuracy. This is partly because all questions of meaning are already settled. The event to be predicted is not subject to any transmutations of meaning between the time of its prediction and the time of its coming off. In the case of neurotic behaviour—the behaviour of the Rat Man for example—the event to be predicted cannot be predetermined in this way. Given that psychoanalytic theory is valid and the particular circumstances of the patient, all that could be predicted would be that the repressed wish will find expression and fulfilment in some behaviour pattern or other of the patient. This is because there are indefinite number of ways in which the wish can find expression and fulfilment—indefinite number of "worlds", no doubt conditioned by the patient's own unique experience, can be constructed which could represent the wish as fulfilled. This is why psychoanalysis, like history, is necessarily a retrospective enquiry.19

^{19.} For a fuller discussion of predictability and the Sciences of Man, see Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", *International Review of Metaphysics*, 1971.

I

At the end of Section II of the last essay I said that my intention in that essay was to defend the integrity of Freudian theory. Granted this integrity, one objection to the theory that I considered was a possible circularity involved in Freudian explanation. In this essay I wish to consider another related objection which finds a circularity in Freudian theory at a slightly different place.

The objection can be stated thus: It is agreed that Freudian redescription of, say, neurotic behaviour cannot be divorced from his theoretical framework of which the notion of the Unconscious (in its substantive or systematic use, and not just in its adjectival use) and its correlates such as repression, resistance, transference, etc., are the crucial elements. However the question of the integrity of Freudian theory is quite different from its justification. Different sorts of considerations are, of course, thought to be relevant in attempts to justify psychoanalytic theory. Thus, for instance,

1. This means that the suggestion, sometimes made about psychoanalytic theory, that the description that the analyst provides is always replaceable, without loss of meaning, by a description in terms of ordinary language, must be wrong. (See for instance Wittgenstein, *The Blue and The Brown Books*":... it is just a new terminology, and can, at any time, be translated into ordinary language.")

it may be said that Freudian theory is justified because it "works", i.e., explanation of neurotic behaviour in terms of the theory cures the neurosis. Again it may be said that "independent" justification is at least possible (not ruled out by the theory) because the childhood experiences which the theory crucially refers to are identifiable independently of the theory itself. Yet another consideration may be as follows: The essential point about psychoanalytic theory is that it explains neurotic behaviour in terms of notions like intention, motive, wish, etc., and a necessary presupposition of any such explanation is that the agent who has his action (behaviour) explained in terms of, say, a particular motive, must himself be capable of sincerely acknowledging the motive as his own.2 But the very aim of psychoanalysis is to bring about such an acknowledgement. Psychoanalytic theory, therefore, satisfies a necessary precondition of explanation in terms of motive, intention, wish, etc., and this must constitute at least a partial justification of the theory. All these considerations are, of course, contestable. In any event, none of these considerations, even if they were correct, could claim to provide a complete justification of any piece of psychoanalytic explanation. And what all of them seem to ignore is the central question of the use of the notion of the unconscious in its systematic sense, i.e., the sense in which to talk about the unconscious is to talk about actual mental operations of which one is not conscious. However—so the objection might run—there may seem to be rather a different sort of justification available which concerns precisely this aspect of psychoanalytic theory. And this is that psychoanalytic technique, the method of psychoanalysis, provides a unique access to the unconscious mental operations. To the analyst himself, therefore, justification is a question of his readiness and competence to use psychoanalytic technique. Put like this, such a procedure of justification might seem innocuous enough. For is it not the case that very often the justification of a scientific hypothesis is a question of one's readiness and competence to use specialised techniques, methods and instruments? However—the objection proceeds—there is an important difference in the two cases. In the case of a scientific hypothesis, the use of specialised technique, etc., does not guarantee that their successful use will result in the hypothesis being seen

^{2.} see above Essays 1 and 2.

as justified. The opposite possibility is always left open. But this is not quite the case with the technique of psychoanalysis. Here the technique is so devised that its "successful" employment virtually guarantees the validity of the theory. The possibility of falsifying the theory is, therefore, ruled out by the "self-authenticating" character of the method prescribed by the theorist. Thus the nature of analytic theory is such that it begs the question in favour of psychoanalytic theory, and is, therefore, involved in a circularity.

What is it about the special technique of psychoanalysis that confers upon it this self-authenticating character? Well, one of the things that may be said is that the technique is so devised that its successful employment depends upon its prior acceptance of the validity of some crucial elements of the theory. This may be illustrated with reference to Freud's distinction between what he calls "wild" psychoanalysis and psychoanalysis proper. "Wild analysis", according to Freud, is faulty, because it seeks to explain the patient's illness in terms of his "ignorance" of the real motives behind his behaviour (symptoms). But says Freud, "the pathological factor is not his ignorance in itself, but the root of this ingorance in his inner resistances, it was they that first called this ignorance into being; and they will maintain it now. The task of the treatment rests in combating these resistances. Informing the patient of what he does not know because he has repressed it is only one of the necessary preliminaries to the treatment...informing the patient of his Unconscious regularly results in an intensification of the conflict in him and an exacerbation of his troubles."4 It will be said that this passage clearly indicates that psychoanalysis is authentic only in cases where it leads to the discovery of "resistances". And resistance is supposed to be an unconscious mental process the notion of which is quite central to the Freudian idea of the "system" Unconscious. Thus it looks as though the method of investigation is logically predetermined to discover unconscious mental processes. Another way of putting it would, of course, be to say that here one cannot talk of discovery at all. A method of discovery must allow for the possibility of the failure to discover. The so-called "authentic" psychoanalytic method does not

^{3.} See F. Cioffi, "Wittgenstein's Freud" in Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein, ed. Peter Winch, p 195.

^{4. &}quot;'Wild' Psychoanalysis", Standard Edition, Vol. 11, p 225.

allow for this possibility, and hence cannot be called a method of discovery at all.

An immediate reaction to this objection might be to say the following: If psychoanalytic technique is not a genuine method of discovery, how is it that it is possible to infer through a use of this technique the actual occurrence of childhood experiences which can, at least in principle, be independently authenticated? Thus one might refer to Marie Bonaparte's servants confirming Freud's suspicion that she had seen intercourse before the age of one. "But", as one critic says, "for this to count in favour of the claim that Freud discovered the laws according to which repressed memories are distorted, we should have to know how often Freud gave reconstructions which contained primal scenes; and we have reason to believe that it was very often. That he should have failed to report those which were not corroborated doesn't involve attributing to him any improbable degree of disingenuousness, since he himself tells us that he attached no importance to this kind of authentication, convinced as he was that his reconstructions must have been essentially true in any case".5

The best way to deal with this objection is perhaps to begin by accepting substantially what it says. Thus let it be admitted that psychoanalytic technique has an existence which is logically borrowed from psychoanalytic theory. In this sense, it could not perhaps be regarded as a genuine method of discovery. Nor can reference to unconscious mental states be regarded, in the ordinary sense, as a hypothesis which can be tested through the use of psychoanalytic technique. One striking difference—which might have something to do with the point we are discussing here—between psychoanalytic technique and any ordinary scientific technique of discovery, is that the aim of the employment of scientific technique is to test the adequacy of a scientific hypothesis in explaining the phenomena under investigation, while the aim of psychoanalytic technique is not just to understand the phenomena under investigation, but to achieve an understanding which is such that the understanding is necessarily coincidental with the removal of the phenomena.

Whatever the significance of this difference, let us ask the question, granted that psychoanalytic technique has an existence which

^{5.} Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein, p 208.

is, as it were, logically parasitic upon psychoanalytic theory, does this not vitiate the whole endeavour? It seems to me that an essential precondition of appreciating the relationship between technique and theory here is to realize the fact that the primary aim of psychoanalytic technique is to evoke an experience of a rather unique sort in the patient, an experience which is also shared, in a somewhat different way from the patient, by the analyst himself. This is very often called the "analytic experience". Now an inevitable stage in the analytic experience is the "trauma" which the patient suffers and of which the analyst himself is, partly at least, the object. But the trauma is incomprehensible except in terms of the psychoanalytic idea of "transference" which, in its turn, is linked with the notion of resistance and thus with that of the Unconscious in its systematic sense. The idea here is that the central theoretical concepts of psychoanalysis provide the framework within which to seek and explicate the meaning of analytic experience. These concepts, speaking very broadly, are, as it were, constitutive of analytic experience.7 To say this is not, of course, to try and remove the dependence of the technique on the theory, but rather to explain it, to show why in psychoanalysis the technique is logically bound up with the theory. If analytic experience is incomprehensible except in terms of the theoretical concepts

- 6. "The objection to hypnosis is that it conceals the resistance and for that reason has obstructed the physician's insight into the play of psychical forces." Standard Edition, Vol. 7, p 252. "I have another reproach to make against this method, namely, it conceals from us all insight into the play of mental forces; it does not permit us, for example, to recognize the resistance with which the patient clings to his disease and thus even fights against his own recovery; yet it is this phenomenon of resistance which alone makes it possible to understand his behaviour in daily life." (ibid, p 261). "We soon perceive that the transference itself is only a piece of repetition, and that the repetition is a transference of the forgotten past not only on to the doctor, but also on to all the other aspects of the current situation.... The role played by resistance, too, is easily recognized. The greater the resistance, the more extensively will acting out (repetition) replace remembering." (Standard Edition, Vol. 12, p 151).
- 7. The following passage from Freud clearly binds technique, treatment and theory together: "Psychoanalysis is the name (1) of a procedure for the investigation of mental processes which are almost inaccessible in any other way, (2) of a method (based upon that investigation) for the treatment of neurotic disorders and (3) of a collection of psychological information (Einsichten) obtained along those lines, which is gradually being accumulated into a new scientific discipline."

of psychoanalysis, and if the aim of psychoanalytic technique is to evoke analytic experience, then the successful use of analytic technique must coincide with the realization that the theoretical concepts are being correctly applied. Thus it is that psychoanalytic technique has an existence which is logically parasitic upon the theory.

Someone might raise a familiar objection here. If it is impossible to identify psychoanalytic technique independently of analytic experience, how can there be a relationship between the two which is such that the former can be said to produce or evoke the latter?8 However, even if we grant the general soundness of this kind of objection—which we need not—in this particular case the objection can be stated at all only by distorting the situation a little. For, to say that technique is parasitic upon theory is not to say that the former is not identifiable independently of the latter. The employment of the technique is a series of actions which can be identified under any number of descriptions. Of course, the description "psychoanalytic technique" has an application which has a retrospective justification. But this cannot prevent there being a causal connexion between psychoanalytic technique and analytic experience, any more than the fact that a soporophic drug is so called can prevent there being a causal connection between the drug and sleeping.

From what we have said it must be clear that psychoanalytic technique cannot be used to justify or "test" the theory, because the former itself derives its justification from the latter. Nor is it a genuine method of discovery, because the discovery, in a sense, has already been made. The point to realize here is that in psychoanalysis the theory defines the logical boundary of the technique; the former, as it were, makes the latter possible.

If our description of the relationship between technique and theory is right, then the circularity, if it is still there, is rendered harmless. While it is admitted that the technique is fully intelligible only in terms of the theory, it is not, at the same time, true that the purpose of the technique is to provide a justification of the theory.

H

Two questions will now be asked: (i) How, then, is psychoanalytic

theory to be justified at all ?; and (ii) What exactly is the function of psychoanalytic technique?

To take question (i) first, one thing that must be clearly appreciated at the outset is that psychoanalytic theory is not like an ordinary scientific (or non-scientific) hypothesis. It seems essential to any such hypothesis that there should be an avenue of investigation available which would afford an access to the hypothesis independently of the phenomena which the hypothesis is supposed to explain. Now in psychoanalysis the phenomena to be explained are, for example, various sorts neurotic behaviour set against the background of analytic experience. However, I think it will be admitted that the only genuine access to the unconscious and its correlates—the "theoretical entities" of psychoanalysis—is through analytic experience.

At this point there may be two different sorts of reactions: (a) Psychoanalysis is once again shown to be a massive exercise in circularity, or (b) it does have a scientific core, but this can be exhibited only by radically reformulating its basic ideas in terms of those of behaviourist psychology, viz., environmental variables and observables. Such reformulations have indeed been attempted —with greater or less enthusiams—by various people.9 But they have never appeared satisfactory either to the orthodox behaviourist, or to the psychologist. And the reason, I think, is clear. Any behaviourist reformulation of psychoanalysis is bound to miss the very point of the latter, and can thus at best be a caricature of it. For the same reason such reformulation tends naturally to be an aberration to the orthodox behaviourist. I think the logical inappropriateness of trying to reformulate psychoanalytic theory in terms of behaviourist psychology is brought out quite beautifully in the following passage from Ricoeur's book: "The psychologist speaks of environmental variables. How are they operative within analytic theory? For the analyst these are not facts known by an outside observer. What is important to the analyst are the dimensions of the environment as believed by the subject; what is pertinent

9. See, for instance, P. W. Bridgman, "Operational Analysis", Philosophy of Science, 1938; E. Frenkel-Brunswick, "Meaning of Psychoanalytic Concepts and the Confirmation of Psychoanalytic Theories", Scientific Monthly, 1954; Albert Ellis, "An Operational Reformulation of the Basic Principles of Psychoanalysis", Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. 1, pp 131-154.

to him is not the fact, but the meaning the fact has assumed in the subject's history. Hence it should not be said that 'early punishment of sexual behaviour is an observable fact that undoubtedly leaves behind a changed organism'. (Skinner, 'Critique of Psychoanalytic Concepts and Theories' in *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 1, p 81). The object of the analyst's study is the meaning for the subject of the same events the psychologist regards as an observer and sets up as environmental variables."

For the subject, therefore, behaviour is not a dependent variable observable from without, but is rather the expression of the changes of meaning of the subject's history, as they are revealed in the analytic situation. One may still speak, of course, of 'changes in probability of action': in this respect the patient treated by Freud may also be treated in terms of behaviourist psychology; but that is not how the behavioural facts are pertinent to analysis. They do not function as observables, but as signifiers for the history of desire. This signification is precisely what Skinner casts into the outer darkness, into the general catch-all of theories about mental life and of prescientific metaphors. However, this meaning of a history does not concern a less advanced stage along the one and only road of behaviourism: strictly speaking, there are no 'facts' in psychoanalysis, for the analyst does not observe, he interprets. 10

If, then, psychoanalysis is not an observational science, its justification cannot be the sort of justification which is appropriate to the observational sciences. In what follows I shall make some remarks about the possibility of another sort of justification which I call after Kant, "transcendental deduction".

Earlier on in this essay, I had said that one way of looking at psychoanalytic concepts is to think of them as "constitutive" of analytic experience. The word is borrowed from Kant. For Kant what he called the categories were "constitutive" of self-conscious experience in the sense that the latter would be

^{10.} Freud and Philosophy, pp 364-365.

^{11.} See above p 85.

inconceivable unless it was organized in terms of the categories. Kant's central proof of this is his argument (or series of arguments) entitled the "Transcendental Deduction".

Is a transcendental deduction of the concepts of psychoanalysis possible? The differences are, of course, enormous. In Kant the question at issue was the possibility of experience itself, and the argument was that experience would be impossible unless it was organized in terms of the categories. In psychoanalysis, however, the question at issue is not the possibility of experience as such; nor is it even the possibility of analytic experience. For the argument cannot be that there could be no experience at all corresponding to what comes to be called analytic experience unless the theoretical concepts of psychoanalysis were brought to bear upon this experience. Such an argument would obviously prove too much.

To see how a transcendental argument might be appropriate here, we must look at psychoanalysis in the context of some of its basic "metaphysical" convictions. One such conviction is that neurotic behaviour and dreams, for example, in spite of their apparent incoherence, belong firmly to that area of human life which is intelligible only within a universe of discourse which has to do with meaning. Their intelligibility depends on their having a "semantics". Secondly, psychoanalysis also believes that the desire to seek pleasure through "love", and to avoid pain 12 is the ultimate determinant of the meaning of human life. In other words, while neurotic behaviour, dreams, etc., must have a semantics, the rules governing this semantics must be capable of being seen as rules dictated by the desire to seek love and to avoid rejection. Thirdly, a point which is connected with the other two, Freud also believed that desire (or wish) enters into the "meaning" of human life at all, because it must be such as to be capable of being articulated by the subject of experience.13 The concept of desire or that of wish is so connected with the notion of its object and beliefs about this object, that the operations of desires and wishes of human desires and wishes, at any rate—is recognizable at all because these are expressible by the agent in speech or something

^{12.} Freud later modified this by adding to "love" the "instinct" of "death".

^{13.} Thus Freud repeatedly insisted that the only access to instincts is through their "representations". Also see above, Essay 2, p 24.

that is essentially similar to speech, i.e., something that has "meaning" or "significance" for him.

Now, given these metaphysical convictions, we might reformulate the central Freudian question as follows: "Granted that neurotic behaviour, dreams, etc., are wish-fulfilling activities, what are the conditions that must be fulfilled in order for this to be possible?" This question has a close enough resemblance to the Kantian question: "Granted that there is knowledge, what are the conditions that must be fulfilled in order that this should be possible?"—for the former to be given at least the *prima facie* status of a transcendental question.¹⁴

What then is the general character of Freud's answer to this question? If neurotic behaviour is wish-fulfilling behaviour, then such behaviour must be governed by the "semantics" of desire, and capable of being placed firmly within the field of speech. And this is the central idea behind the notion of analytic experience. Analytic experience is the patient's exploration, helped by the analyst, of the meaning of neurotic symptoms. And this exploration inevitably takes place in the medium of speech. Psychoanalysis is thus quite literally the "talking cure". But analytic experience as such has in its turn a prima facie incoherence which would seem intractable in the same way as neurotic behaviour itself. Given the metaphysical conviction of psychoanalysis that exploration of meaning in human life must be dictated by the concept of desire or wish, the intractability of analytic experience must ensue from its apparent lack of link with the subject's wishes. And this link is provided by the concepts of psychoanalysis. The contention is not indeed that analytic experience would be totally indescribable except in terms of the concepts of psychoanalysis. It would still be describable in other ways; but any such description would fail to assign a "point" or meaning to the experience. It is only when psychoanalytic concepts are brought to bear upon the latter that its meaning is revealed. The key notions in this context are those of resistance, transference, repetition and remembrance. These concepts, while providing the framework within which to explore the meaning of analytic experience, also yield through a more or less

^{14.} There still remains, of course, an obvious and importnat difference which I shall discuss a little later.

deductive procedure the entire network of the psychoanalyst's theoretical concepts.

Take the notion of resistance. If there is an area or stage of analytic experience which can be meaningfully described only as resistance—on the part of the patient—to the acknowledgment of a wish of his, then we have at once an access to the concept of the unconscious in its specifically Freudian employment. The essential thing about the unconscious in this sense is that between it and what Freud calls the preconscious and the conscious, there is a barrier, and that any attempt to cross the barrier must meet with resistance. The idea of a barrier here involves much more than the thought that quite frequently we tend to forget, ignore, overlook the motives of our actions and that with a little effort of attention, or honest look at oneself, or change of perspective we can come to acknowledge these motives. If "barrier" meant no more than this, then we would be quite justified in saying with Wittgenstein, of the thesis that there exist unconscious thought: "...it is just a new terminology and can any time be translated into ordinary language". 15 The idea of barrier here marks off in a fairly radical way motives of which we are ordinarily conscious and which we are at least capable of acknowledging in an ordinary way, from motives which we cannot come to acknowledge in an ordinary way. And hence also the appropriateness of the idea of resistance.

This last point also reinforces a point which I laboured to make in the last essay; namely, the point that while psychoanalysis regards enquiry into wishes as basically a "semantic" enquiry, i.e., a work of interpretation, it must also, at the same time, treat wishes as being endowed with causal powers, or as having energy. It is this that justifies the propriety of the use of notions like "barrier" and resistance. ("As soon as the economics, i.e., explanation in terms of expenditure of energy is separated from its rhetorical manifestations, the metapsychology no longer systematizes what occurs in the analytic dialogue; it engenders a fancilful demonology, if not an absurd hydraulics.")¹⁶

If this is the sort of transcendental or, if you like, quasi-transcendental justification possible of psychoanalytic theory then one (to

^{15.} The Blue and the Brown Books, p 23; also quoted above p 47.

^{16.} Freud and Philosophy, p 371.

some curious) consequence of it would seem to be that transcendental deduction here implies the occurrence of mental processes which are, in principle, unobservable, because, un-conscious. There is, however, a parallel here with Kant. According to Kant, the transcendental deduction of the categories implied an act of synthesis on the part of the subject of experiences. This act of synthesis he called "transcendental", and at least one reason for so calling it was that it was, in principle, unobservable (non-experienceable). Its unobservability arose from the "fact" that it was this act which brought the categories into operation and that, therefore, the categories themselves were inapplicable to it; but applicability of the categories, according to the transcendental deduction, was the necessary condition of observability. It must be admitted, however, that this is only one plausible interpretation of "transcendental synthesis". There are others17 and most of these are inspired by the difficulties of the idea of an actual transcendental act which is in principle unobservable, which is such that we can never catch ourselves at it.

I do not, however, wish to enter here into Kantian exgesis at all. My point will be made, if I can say that given the above interpretation, there will be a substantially inalienable element of mystery and unintelligibility in Kant's notion of a transcendental act of synthesis. The Freudian unconscious mental processes, on the other hand, while in a way undoubtedly mysterious, and even, in Wittgenstein's word, "uncanny", are not devoid of intelligibility. This is owing to the fact that unconscious mental processes bear a deep resemblance to conscious *linguistic* acts. The unconscious, one might say, is structured like language. There are, of course, enormous differences:

The forms by which an instinct reaches the psychism is called a 'representative'; this is a signifying factor, but is not yet linguistic. As for the 'presentation', properly so called, this is not, in its specific texture, of the order of language; it is a 'presentation of things', not a 'presentation of words'. Secondly, in dream regression, the form into which the dream-thought dissolves corresponds to the mechanism which Freud calls regression to

^{17.} See for example, J. Bennett, Kant's Analytic, Cambridge, 1970; and P. Strawson, Bounds of Sense, London, 1969.

'pictorial representation'. Finally, when he treats of the derivatives substituted for one another and for the instinctual representatives, and when he explains remoteness and distortion, he always relates them to the order of fantasy or images, and not of speech. In these three different circumstances Freud focuses on a signifying power that is operative prior to language. The primary process encounters the facts of language only when words are treated here as things: this is the case of schizophrenia and also of dreams in their more 'schizophrenic' aspects.¹⁸

These differences, however, acquire importance only when language is taken, in a narrow sense, to be a system of words or sentences which are used explicitly to affirm, deny, command, ask questions and so on. But language functions not only through these activities, but also through insinuation, evokation, double meanings, metaphors, similies and so on. And when we shift our attention to this wider sense of language, there is hardly any difficulty in the idea that an image or a thing can be the bearer of meanings of various different sorts. In dreams or neurotic behaviour, the unit of meaning for the subject is not the word, but an image or a thing or the word considered as a thing. Here the rules of combination, collation, sequence, etc., would naturally be different from those governing the use of words in a public language;19 but nonetheless, there are rules here, and they are perhaps dictated by the pattern of the subject's private experiences. Such rules are in operation, for instance, in the formation of "myths", "folk-lore", "superstitions", "proverbs", etc.

What perhaps still remains mysterious is that for Freud these rules must operate without the conscious control of the subject of experiences. However, the mystery can, at least to a certain extent be mitigated if one can appreciate the Freudian idea that while desires and wishes must manifest themselves through signifiers, they also have a causal power whereby they are kept in operation. But the latter is possible only by means of the desire generating, as it were, its own signifiers. Freud's aesthetics is basically an extension of this idea. And while this aesthetics cannot be accepted in its entirety—indeed Freud never worked it out in anything like a detailed or

^{18.} Freud and Philosophy, p 398.

^{19.} See above, Essay 2, pp 37-38.

^{20.} See above, Essay 3, pp 50-53.

systematic manner—it does, I think afford a substantial justification of the idea. It also explains a point that I made in Essay 2 above, the point, namely, that in certain circumstances (e.g., artistic inspiration, creation of myths, a child playing with words, etc.) language acquires an independence from conscious control.

Let me now turn briefly to a consideration of the second of the two questions which I posed at the beginning of this section. The question was: If the function of psychoanalytic technique is not to provide a justification of the theoretical concepts of psychoanalysis, what, then, is its function?

I think the answer lies in an extension of the Kantian analogy. To repeat, the transcendental question in Kant was: Given that we have experience, what are the conditions that must be fulfilled in order that we do so? The question, of course, was not a "scientific" one; that is, it was not a preliminary to a causal enquiry into the circumstances which gives rise to, produce experience. The physiologist's enquiry into the processes of the brain would be an enquiry of this sort. Rather, Kant's question was a conceptual one. It can be rephrased as: What is it that makes the concept of experience comprehensible at all? The Freudian question, namely, what is it that makes analytic experience comprehensible at all is a conceptual one. It is another matter that the concepts which are thought to lend comprehensibility to analytic experience necessarily involve reference to unconscious mental causes.

However, apart from the conceptual question, a purely causal question, corresponding to the physiologist's question about experience, can also be asked. Such a question would have the form: What is it that is causally responsible for producing analytic experience? Let me explain the difference by means of an example. Suppose it is the case that the intake of bhang produces a state of mind which can only be described as "warmth and affection for everybody". Now, this state of mind would be recognizable as one of warmth and affection independently of our knowledge that the person in question had taken bhang; and this, even if we accept a causal analysis of the emotion of warmth and affection. Its recognizability is a question of whether or not certain concepts can be brought to bear upon it. Now, I would like to say that psychoanalytic technique is part of the causal condition which brings about analytic experience. The question of the comprehensibility of analytic experience is independent—or at least partly so—of

what it is that brings it about; and this, even if we accept a causal analysis of some of the concepts (e.g., resistance) the applicability of which makes analytic experience recognizable as such. And just as a physiological enquiry into the causal conditions of the fact of our having experience does not constitute a justification of what Kant called the categories, similarly the aim of psychoanalytic techniqueis not the justification of the central concepts of psychoanalysis. It simply creates the causal conditions favourable for the coming into being of analytic experience.

Ш

But it might now be asked: What about the metaphysical convictions, which alone can ultimately support the kind of transcendental deduction that I have tried to outline above? What, for instance, is the justification of Freud's most general and daring belief that man's life consists in an unbroken pursuit of love. Here, I think, inasmuch as psychoanalysis is a science of interpretation, a search for meanings—what has been called the "hermeneutic circle" is unavoidable. What, then, is the hermeneutic circle? Charles Taylor explains it in the following way: "An emotion term like 'shame' for instance, essentially refers to a certain kind of situation, the 'shameful' or 'humiliating', and a certain mode of response, that of hiding oneself, of covering up, or else 'wiping out' the 'blot'. That is, it is essential to the feeling's being identified as shame that it be related to this situation and give rise to this type of disposition. But this situation in its turn can only be identified in relation to the feelings which it provokes; and the disposition is to a goal which can similarly not be understood without reference to the feelings experienced: the 'hiding' in question is one which will cover up my shame; it is not the same as hiding from an armed pursuer; we can understand what is meant by 'hiding' here if we understand what kind of feeling and situation is being talked about. We have to be within the circle."22

To extend this to the case of psychoanalysis: The neurotic's behaviour in the particular situation in which he is placed, namely,

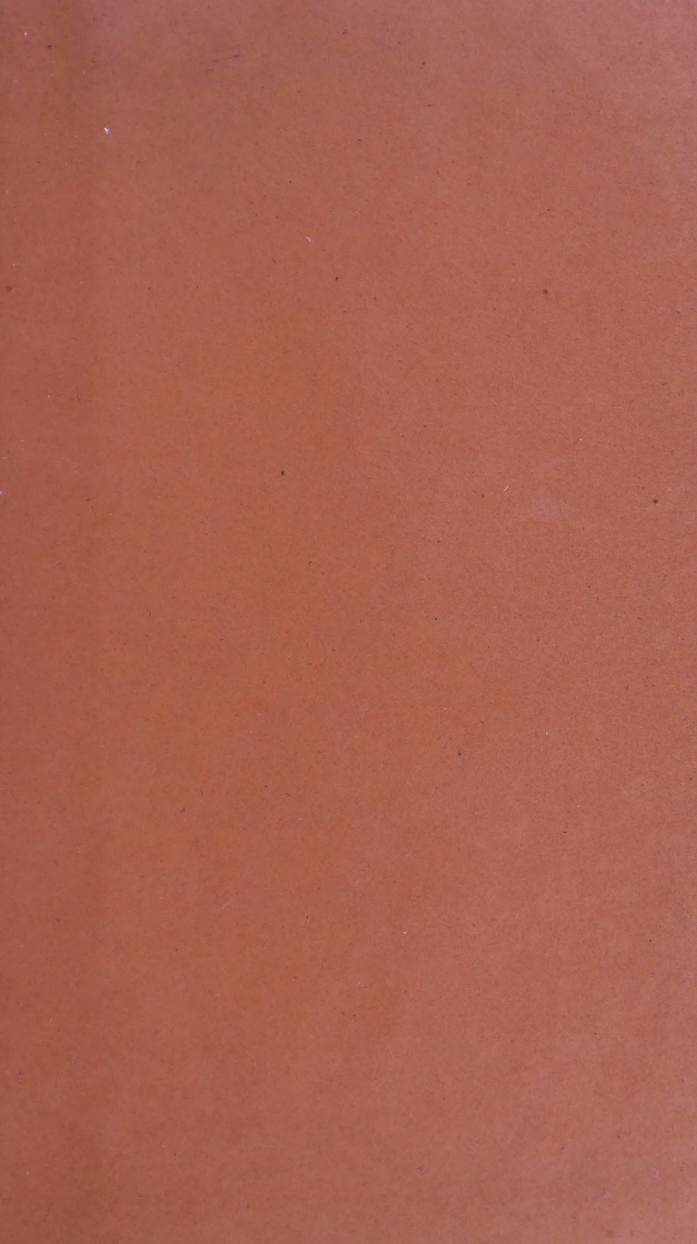
22. *Ibid*, pp 12-13.

^{21.} See Freud and Philosophy, p 49 and Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", International Review of Metaphysics, 1971.

the analytic situation, (which includes the analyst as well) is recognizable as the expression or pursuit of love only with reference to his feelings and experiences in the situation. But, on the other hand, his feelings and experiences cannot be identified as "love" except by reference to his behaviour in the situation. Thus here also we move "within the hermeneutic circle". The only differnce is that, the circle binding the feeling, the situation and the behaviour is a deep one in that they are identifiable in the way that they are identified only by connecting them with feelings, situations and behaviour which are, as it were, hidden from the patient's view. But the hermeneutic circle is not a defect, for it is something which all sciences of interpretation must move within. Something can count as a defect only if it is, at least in principle, possible for the thing which has it to be without it. But it is impossible for a science of interpretation to break the hermeneutic circle. It can do so only at the cost of depriving itself of its hermeneutic character. Thus psychoanalysis as a science of interpretation must remain "within the circle".









Dr Mrinal Miri, trained in Delhi University and the University of Cambridge, is Head of the Department of Philosophy at North Eastern Hill University, Shillong. He has contributed outstanding papers to national and international journals. He was a Visiting Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study.

